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Nicole Meyers '26.5 wins SGA presidency in tight race

By NOAH WILLSON
Contributing Writer

After a high-turnout contest on Monday, April 14, Nicole Meyers '26.5 won the Student Government Association election and will serve as Middlebury's first female Feb president next year. Together with vice presidents Anna Miller '26 and Anina Dentel-Pham '27, Meyers defeated Tony Wang '26 by just 1.9%, or 28 votes — the tightest presidential margin in at least the past eight years.

With 660 votes, Meyers' campaign edged ahead with 45.6% of the vote, as opposed to Wang's 43.7% of the total 1,365 votes cast on Monday; 155 voters abstained from choosing a candidate.

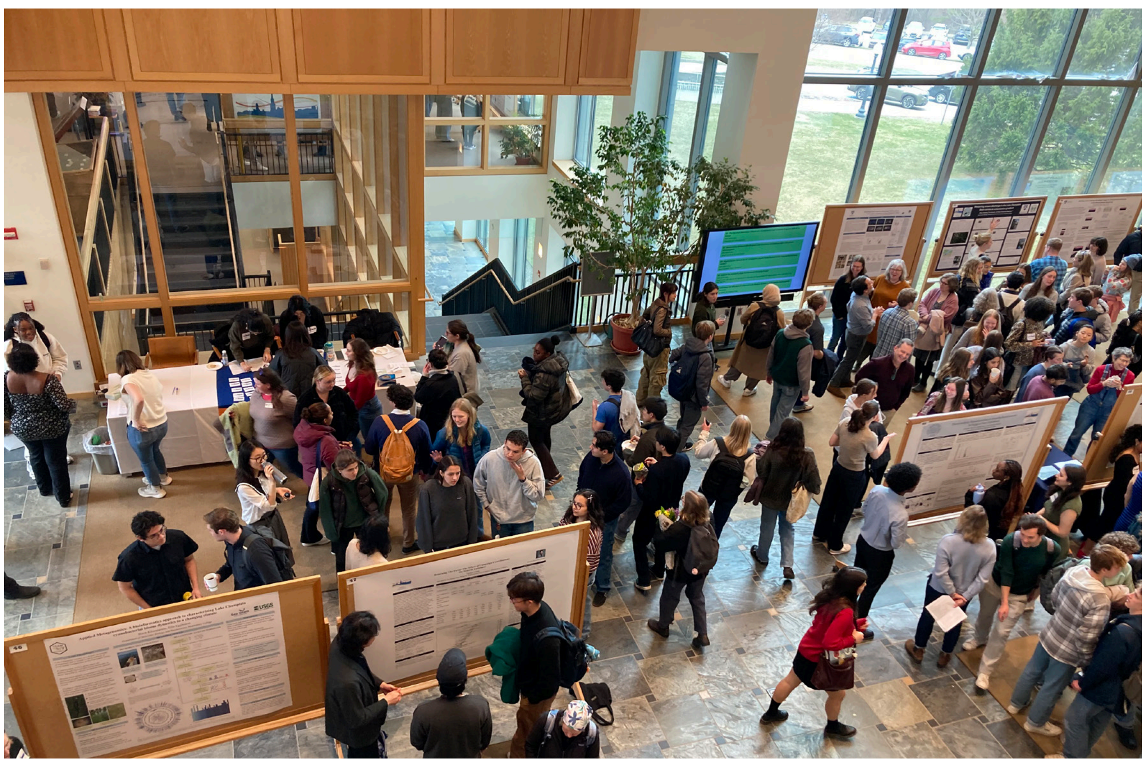
Meyers, a Literary Studies major and the current SGA Health and Wellness Director, wrote in an email to The Campus that she looks forward to turning student feedback into policy next year.

"I'm incredibly honored that the student body believed in me, my team and my mission," Meyers wrote. "I love hearing students' concerns and developing solutions, which is something I'm looking forward to doing next year."

This year's single-day

Continued on Page 3

18TH ANNUAL SPRING STUDENT SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS OVER 200 PRESENTATIONS



COURTESY PHOTO/ HEIDI GREENWALD

The Syposium gave students the opportunity to present their research projects to interested listeners in BiHall.

By RACHELLE TALBERT
Copy Editor

On April 11, students, faculty and visitors filtered through BiHall to explore the 248 student research projects and presentations given at the annual Spring Student Symposium. Community members stood shoulder-to-shoulder in the packed Great Hall during poster sessions and hopped around classrooms throughout the building to listen to students presenting research, enjoying the plethora of topics explored at this year's event.

"This year, we had so many students clamoring to present that we easily outgrew what the Great Hall could accommodate and were able to turn to the Q-Center as a generous, convenient space for poster presentations to grow," said Amy Morsman, professor of History and co-director of this year's research showcase who spoke at the opening of the symposium.

Presentations were split into two categories: 15-minute individual lectures and general sessions of poster displays. Topics ranged from exploring the role that art plays in the Afghan refugee community to developing a three-dimensional microscope to image blood samples. Each project aligned with the shared goal of academic exploration.

When he opened the symposium on Friday morning, Interim President Steve Snyder told the assembled crowd he looked forward to a range of diverse presentations that day from all areas of the college's academic disciplines.

"This is the 18th annual Spring Student Symposium, which highlights students' research and creative work

Continued on Page 2

FOUR STUDENT, ALUMNI IMMIGRANT RECORDS REVOKED AS COLLEGE URGES CAUTION

By HUGO ZHANG
News Editor

On Wednesday, April 16, the college announced that a current international student at Middlebury had their Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) records revoked by the U.S. government, placing their legal status in question and leaving them at risk of deportation. Three alumni from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey faced the same revocation in recent days, according to the email sent to the community titled "Immigration Issues at Middlebury."

The college declined to share further details about these specific individuals, citing privacy concerns, but stated that Middlebury's office of International Student Scholar Services (ISSS) and Student Affairs are working with the affected community members to provide legal guidance and other support.

"We have met with our student and contacted our

Continued on Page 2

From NESCAC to NFL: The unlikely story of Thomas "The Tank" Perry

COURTESY PHOTO / RODNEY WOOTERS

Thomas Perry '25 was the only DIII player invited and competed against DI talent at the East-West Shrine Bowl on January 30, 2025.

By TING CUI
Senior Sports Editor

We call him Thomas. His teammates on the football team call him TP. Scouts now call him Thomas the Tank. But soon, the whole country might know Thomas Perry's name.

Around Middlebury's campus, Thomas Perry '25 is instantly recognizable. Not just for his muscular frame, but for his trademark three glasses of milk in Proctor Dining Hall, daily 12-egg breakfast and unwavering pleasantness. This innate warmth permeated his recent press conference on Tuesday, April 15, where Perry charmed a room full of journalists with his boyish grin, easy-going humor and humble responses.

As the National Football League (NFL) draft approaches on April 24, Perry, Middlebury College's standout interior offensive lineman, is on the precipice of accomplishing something remarkable: Becoming one of the rare Division III players to make the leap to professional football. There are currently only seven Division III players in the NFL, with offensive linemen Quinn Meinerz and Ben Bartch being the most prominent. The odds would seem insurmountable to most.

NFL dreams don't typically

Continued on Page 12

WHY IS A DOUBLE LATTE $6.50 AT CROSSROADS CAFÉ?

EVAN WEISS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Crossroads Cafe operates under the broader dining umbrella, meaning its pricing is dictated by Food Services.

By LUKE POWER
News Editor

Crossroads Café has raised prices again this year, meaning students now pay over $6 for a specialty matcha, mocha or maple latte from Middlebury's only student-run coffee shop.

Despite its popularity as a staple study location, meeting spot and caffeine fix, Executive Director of Food Service Operations Dan Detora said that Crossroads has struggled financially in recent years, in addition to other issues with supply chains and shortages.

"Crossroads is designed to break even each year, but has actually lost money over the past few years... this year they are on track to break even," he wrote in an email to The Campus.

Jayda Murray '25.5, one of three student managers at Crossroads, explained that securing long-term contracts with high-quality, consistent suppliers is a persistent problem for the business.

"One struggle of running a café on campus would be access to quality ingredients. This is a complicated issue, because not all local vendors are interested in being tied down by contractual agreements with Middlebury," Murray wrote in an email to The Campus.

Georgia Gates '28, a student barista at the café, added that national shortages in key ingredients have also limited their offerings recently.

"There's been a serious matcha shortage. Japan has been having a nationwide shortage, and Japan is where most U.S. matcha is sourced from. Crossroads also frequently gets raided early in the week, and by the end of the week, we tend to run out of some milk products and juices for smoothies," she said.

The business itself is one of Middlebury's Retail Food Operations, which means that it operates under the broader dining umbrella, with its pricing and business plans dictated by Food Services. Back-office staff also have to estimate how much of each

Continued on Page 3

NEWS

Superior Court dismisses all remaining issues in Mead lawsuit

By MAGGIE BRYAN

▸ PAGE 3

LOCAL

Plan to remove beavers from state-owned dams sparks concerns

By RYAN McELROY

Addison County communities protest library funding cuts

By VIOLET WEXLER

▸ PAGE 4

OPINIONS

The pragmatic reasons for Middlebury to do the 'right thing'

By 12 ECONOMICS FACULTY

It's time to ditch Monterey

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

▸ PAGE 7

ARTS & CULTURE

"Grease" is the word!

By ZIYING JIAN

Reel Critic: "No Other Land"

By THIE HARTHONO

▸ PAGE 9

SPORTS

Men's and women's tennis teams build momentum

By THEO MANIATIS

Seven Questions with Michael Vanesko '25

By BROOKE FRIBERG

▸ PAGE 11

18TH ANNUAL SPRING STUDENT SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS OVER 200 PRESENTATIONS

Continued from Page 1

across the arts and sciences alike," Snyder said. The interim president moderated an early morning presentation session, joining many faculty and administrators who took time out of their Friday schedule to facilitate an hour-long set of student lectures.

Beginning in 2007 with just 60 participants, the Spring Student Symposium has grown dramatically since its establishment. Students came to explore majors and potential research opportunities, support friends and to have the opportunity to learn about work across academic departments.

To direct this year's event, Morsman and Professor of Anthropology Michael Sheridan led a committee with Assistant Professor of Biology Greg Pask, Associate Professor of History of Art & Architecture Erin Sassin and Assistant Professor of Chinese Chialan Sharon Wang.

"It just doesn't happen on its own. It takes work — a lot of it — to execute this extravaganza of student creation," Morsman told the crowd on Friday morning.

Many student presenters spoke to the excitement of sharing their work with a broader audience of students across campus and disciplines. Maya Teiman '25, who gave a presentation titled "Public Perceptions of Climate Solutions at Middlebury College," said that having a designated space where people wanted to learn more about her work was meaningful.

"This is my first symposium; I've never done it before, but I think it's a great way to be more intentional about research and get it out there. Day to day, I think people don't really care about my research just because most of my friends are tired of hearing me talk about it, but it's nice to know that people actually have an interest," Teiman said.

Salomé Monero '25, another student presenter, emphasized the importance of the symposium as a space for dialogue across disciplines.

"Before my time, there was a commons system, which means that there was an intellectual community on campus, and I feel like nowadays people are hesitant to have that sort of conversation outside of the classroom. I feel like the symposium opens up the conversation or the liberal arts experience where the students are interested and excited to continue engaging with these intellectual topics," Monero said.

Monero's talk, "Bridging Cognition and Communication: The Impact of Language Awareness on L2 Learning," focused on how understanding linguistics can impact learning a second language. Monero said she enjoyed hearing from non-linguistics focused students and being able to share her passion with those who have never studied linguistics before.

Assistant Professor of Statistics Alex Lyford noted how particularly interdisciplinary presentations were at this year's symposium and was highly impressed with presenters across all levels of courses.

"Nowadays, every research project that students present is interdisciplinary and utilizes a wide variety of perspectives and approaches. Thesis work has always been impressive, but I watched several students present work they did in an introductory or low-level elective course, and it was phenomenal!," Lyford wrote in an email to The Campus.

As the number of presenters at symposium has grown, Lyford has noticed that general enthusiasm and student support for their friends has grown as well.

Redefining Resistance

EVAN WEISS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

An Imagined Island:
British Perceptions of Architecture, Urban Landscapes, and Religious Identity in Early Modern Crete (1645–1715)

RYAN MCELROY / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

MAGGIE BRYAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

RYAN MCELROY / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Assistant Professor of Statistics Alex Lyford spoke to the interdisciplinary nature of most of the presentations at the Syposuim.

"I'll admit that when I started in 2017, many students treated the Symposium as a "day off" from classes. I don't have any data to support this, but I don't hear any students expressing that sentiment anymore, and the turnout has been fantastic," Lyford wrote. "It's great to watch basically the entire track team show up to support one of their peers at their presentation. I didn't notice this happening 8 years ago."

David Torres '28, a symposium attendee, said he appreciated the level of depth that the symposium presentations showcased.

"It meets the expectation of academic inquiry and the way that you're able to discuss your research in a manner that dives into not just surface level inquiries, but full on investigations that could potentially shape that career or field," Torres said.

Alongside the celebration of student research, the recent event emphasized Middlebury's vibrant academic community. As Sheridan said in his welcome speech, "The symposium is Middlebury at its best."

For the event's directors and for many others, the Spring Student Symposium embodies the values they appreciate in their liberal arts educations: Curiosity, depth and community.

Editor's Note: Editor in Chief Ryan McElroy '25 and News Editor Evan Weiss '25 contributed reporting to this article.

Four student, alumni immigrant records revoked as college urges caution

Continued from Page 1

alumni and have been working to support them since we learned of this news… We are doing everything we can to guide and support the student and their family during this difficult time," the email reads.

In response to growing uncertainty around federal immigration policy and enforcement, Middlebury had previously hosted a virtual Q&A session on Monday afternoon with immigration attorney Dan Berger.

Organized by the Office of Student Affairs in coordination with the college's Office of General Counsel, the event aimed to address questions regarding international visa processing and the implications of recent federal policy decisions. Guided by Vice President for Student Affairs Smita Ruzicka, the conversation focused on new immigration policies, travel considerations, enforcement concerns and what international students should expect in the months ahead. The meeting was not recorded or transcribed by the college due to the sensitive nature of the discussion, Ruzicka stated.

Featured speaker Dan Berger, partner at immigration law firm Green and Spiegel LLP and a nationally recognized expert on academic and medical immigration, shared his general perspective but clarified he was not there to provide legal advice. Berger opened the discussion with a sobering message.

"This is more uncertain than anything I've seen in 25 years of immigration practice," he said. "Just three weeks ago, we were bracing for a new travel ban. Now, we're seeing widespread student visa terminations."

Berger highlighted the increasing use of artificial intelligence by federal agencies to flag and revoke visas, often without human oversight or prior warning. Like the affected Middlebury community members this week, many students are finding their SEVIS records abruptly terminated. Termination of a SEVIS record means that the individual loses their student status and they must immediately leave the country or apply to have their SEVIS reinstated. If their status is not reinstated, they could be deported.

"The scary part is how arbitrary this all feels," Berger said. "Sometimes it's about a name match. Sometimes it's based on a social media post. We don't always know."

The bulk of Berger's talk revolved around travel — a pressing concern for students navigating study abroad programs, job opportunities or visits home. While most international students are still traveling without issues, Berger cautioned against assuming smooth re-entry to the U.S.

"It's not that everyone is being stopped," he said, "but if a single bad case still makes national news, it tells you these incidents are rare — but serious."

Berger advised students to evaluate their individual risk based on several factors, including arrest history (even juvenile or expunged), digital footprint and political activism. He mentioned that international students involved in activism surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict may be more likely to be targeted than those who are not.

Berger emphasized preparation before traveling and encouraged students to speak with immigration attorneys. Travelers should carry original or clear copies of immigration documents, enroll in trusted traveler programs like Global Entry or TSA PreCheck and avoid airports known for tougher enforcement. He mentioned hearing of travelers encountering the most problems at airports in Boston and Texas, as well as at Toronto Pearson Airport, where travelers can go through U.S. immigration.

Middlebury's General Counsel Hannah Ross joined Berger for the talk, fielding questions and outlining the college's approach to federal enforcement.

"Students are not obligated to grant law enforcement access to Middlebury buildings," Ross clarified. "Any warrant or subpoena must be reviewed by my office before we release any student information."

Berger also confirmed that Middlebury recently joined 85 other colleges and universities in supporting a legal challenge brought by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) against federal screening policies that penalize visa holders for political expression.

Despite these institutional efforts, both Ross and Ruzicka reminded students that Middlebury does not provide individual legal representation. Instead, they pointed students toward external legal resources, including the American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire, which is currently representing a Dartmouth College student whose F-1 visa was terminated.

Among the more concrete takeaways was an emphasis on keeping immigration documentation up-to-date and easily accessible. Students were advised to carry their I-94 admission record, visa stamp (if applicable) and identification at all times, particularly when traveling between states or by car.

"You may not have many rights at an airport," Berger warned. "You're not technically in the U.S. until you've cleared immigration."

In addition to physical documentation, panelists encouraged minimizing one's digital footprint. Ruzicka mentioned that International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) had already provided resources to students on "digital hygiene," including removing facial recognition features from social media and managing publicly available information.

In the session's final stretch, Berger turned toward longer-term planning. For students on temporary humanitarian visas such as DACA, TPS or parole programs, he recommended building contingency plans now.

"These programs were never meant to be permanent," he said. "Think about transitioning into something more stable — work visas, asylum applications or family-based petitions."

Ruzicka closed the event by thanking attendees for engaging with such complex material.

"This isn't an easy time," she said, "but we want you to know we're here, and we'll keep updating you with accurate information."

The college plans to continue these conversations and will work with student organizations like the Student Government Association (SGA) to develop more training and resources. In the meantime, students were encouraged to reach out to ISSS and Student Affairs for guidance, and to prioritize self-care amid what Ruckiza called a "heavy digital information environment."

"Take care of yourselves," Ruzicka urged. "And know that there is a network of support here for you — on this campus and beyond."

NICOLE MEYERS '26.5 WINS SGA PRESIDENCY IN TIGHT RACE

Continued from Page 1

After a high-turnout contest on Monday, April 14, Nicole Meyers '26.5 won the Student Government Association election and will serve as Middlebury's first female Feb president next year. Together with vice presidents Anna Miller '26 and Anina Dentel-Pham '27, Meyers defeated Tony Wang '26 by just 1.9%, or 28 votes — the tightest presidential margin in at least the past eight years.

With 660 votes, Meyers' campaign edged ahead with 45.6% of the vote, as opposed to Wang's 43.7% of the total 1,365 votes cast on Monday; 155 voters abstained from choosing a candidate.

Meyers, a Literary Studies major and the current SGA Health and Wellness Director, wrote in an email to The Campus that she looks forward to turning student feedback into policy next year.

"I'm incredibly honored that the student body believed in me, my team and my mission," Meyers wrote. "I love hearing students' concerns and developing solutions, which is something I'm looking forward to doing next year."

This year's single-day election marked record-breaking voter turnout with a total of 47.3%, a slight uptick from last year's 46.7% of the student body, who voted in a three-day period.

"What surprised me the most was the voter turnout. I was shocked by how many people came out and voted," Meyers wrote.

Other than the schoolwide presidential election, senators for each class year were also elected this week.

Five candidates ran for Sophomore Senator, with current senators Jeffrey Teh '28 (39.0%) and Namrita Ghani '28 (20.9%) winning the positions for next fall.

Four candidates ran for the Junior Senator position, with Shloka Raghavan '27 (25.3%) and Jori Almahdi '27 (18.1%) coming away victorious.

Senior Senators Bryan Harris '26 and Joshua Garson '26 also won their race, which was uncontested.

The Feb Senator vote went to Jonny Eaton '26.5, who ran uncontested.

Middlebury students were introduced to the candidates on Friday, April 11 at the SGA Presidential Debate in Wilson Hall, where candidates answered questions about their contrasting agendas.

Meyers, who stressed the importance of listening to student voices, outlined her platform with a strong focus on health and community. She continued on to state the importance of a strong relationship between the SGA and the incoming President, Ian Baucom, especially during times of national political turmoil.

"I'd like to look at possibly facilitating weekly meetings between me and [Baucom], especially given the fast-moving nature of this situation," Meyers wrote.

Wang began with a warm opening that addressed the crowd, which included many of his supporters. He continued on, highlighting policies that focused on social and structural changes. Wang emphasized the importance of fostering a tight-knit community between athletic, international and first year student social circles.

"We are all at one campus, you know we're a community — let's try and close that gap," Wang said.

After the SGA debate, candidate Islam Abushareah '26.5 withdrew from the ballot on Saturday, April 12. In a statement issued on his campaign's Instagram account, Abushareah thanked his team's supporters, who he said had "demonstrated humanism that is becoming rarer and rarer on our campus."

Abushareah's campaign went on to endorse Meyers, adding that "we trust her ability to deliver servant leadership to the student body."

Meyers will take office at the start of the academic year next fall, hoping to bring about change in a timely, thoughtful manner. Her priorities include facilitating conversations with the college's incoming president Ian Baucom and beginning conversations with the Snow Bowl to increase accessibility for all students, as well as addressing the threats to higher education looming on the horizon.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Top to bottom: SGA President-Elect Nicole Meyers '26.5 and Vice Presidents-Elect Anina Dentel-Pham '27 and Anna Miller '26.

SUPERIOR COURT DISMISSES ALL REMAINING ISSUES IN MEAD LAWSUIT

By MAGGIE BRYAN

Senior News Editor

On April 9, Judge Robert A. Mello of the Addison Unit of the Vermont Superior Court ruled in favor of the college in the ongoing case to restore the Mead name to the Middlebury Chapel. The court denied all motions made by Jim Douglas '72 on behalf of the Mead estate and granted the college's motion for summary judgment, effectively dismissing the case.

A spokesperson for the college told The Campus that Middlebury was satisfied with the resolution of the case, which began over two years ago in March 2023.

"We are pleased with the Court's decision on April 9, 2025, to grant Middlebury College's most recent motion for summary judgment, which resolves all claims brought by the Estate of John A. Mead in the College's favor," the spokesperson wrote.

In 1916, Vermont Governor John A. Mead '1864 financed the construction of the college's new chapel, which was subsequently named Mead Memorial Chapel in his honor. Three years ago, the college removed the Mead name from the chapel, citing Mead's support for eugenics policies in the early 20th century. A few months later Douglas, as special administrator of the Mead estate, filed a lawsuit against the college, claiming that the name change violated the conditions of Mead's original donation and tarnished the Mead name.

Most of the terms of Douglas's complaint were addressed in an Oct. 3, 2024 court decision, but three were left undecided: Whether the initial transaction was a gift or a contract; if it was a contract, had Middlebury breached the covenant of good faith and fair dealing; and third, if there was a breach of the covenant, what damages, if any, could Douglas be entitled to recover.

In this most recent iteration of the case, the court, after reviewing records of the chapel's construction and history, found that despite the Mead family's strong ties to the chapel, there was no contract outlining or enforcing those ties.

"There can be little doubt that, apart from merely the name of the chapel, all involved closely identified the chapel with the Meads. Nevertheless, the record contains no evidence that the parties ever agreed to any perpetual naming condition, any sort of non-disparagement agreement, or any contract at all that possibly could have remained in force in 2021 such that its implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing could then have been breached," the court wrote.

Thus, last week, the court dismissed the remaining three issues. In an email to The Campus, Douglas expressed his disappointment in the court's decision.

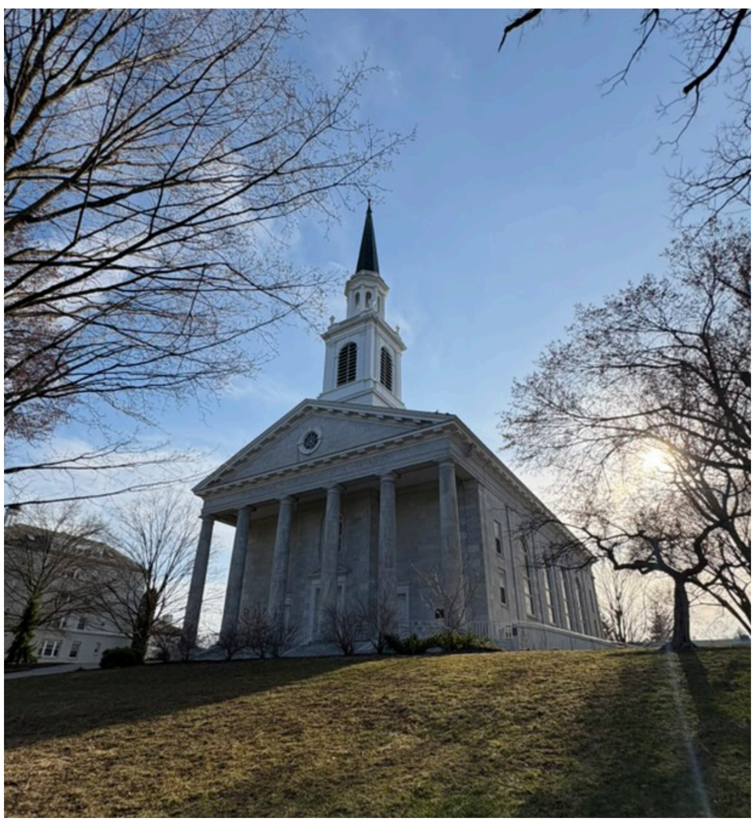
"We respectfully disagree with the Trial Court's decision to deny us the opportunity to present this case to a jury," he wrote.

Douglas also mentioned that he is considering an appeal to the Vermont Supreme Court, with hopes that it would provide a more receptive audience than the Addison County Superior Court.

"We may seek a full and fair review by the Vermont Supreme Court, as we believe that a panel of objective Vermonters would understand the injustice done to Gov. Mead and his family. He was punished merely for expressing his ideas, which should concern every fair-minded Vermonter," he wrote.

Despite the potential for the suit to continue on appeal, the college stated that the resolution of this case serves to affirm Middlebury's institutional right to freedom of expression.

"The College has and will remain committed to exercising the fundamental right of freedom of expression and open debate on our campus," the college spokesperson wrote.



MAGGIE BRYAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Vermont Superior Court's recent decision does not required Middlebury to reinstate the "Mead" name to the chapel.

WHY IS A DOUBLE LATTE $6.50 AT CROSSROADS CAFÉ?

Continued from Page 1

ingredient to order, a task Murray said can be quite difficult.

"Matcha and espresso beans are probably our top two most-difficult goods to match supply and demand. Those are also our most important ingredients, along with chai, so we totally understand when our customers are bummed when we're out of something," she wrote.

The fact that Crossroads operates at a loss came as a shock to some Crossroads regulars. Jack Scher '28 felt incredulous upon hearing that the café does not turn a profit.

"I go to Crossroads almost every morning for a coffee, and there's almost always a small line, and the booths and tables are always full. The prices are pretty typical, even for a New York City coffee shop, so I wonder where all the money goes," Scher said.

The cafe's gross revenue in 2024 was $183,000, coming mostly from a mix of coffee, milkshake, smoothie and sushi sales, according to Detora. The sushi is sourced from Sushi Maru, but Crossroads only pays for whatever it can sell.

"Large and Small Latte's are the most popular along with Matcha and Maple Lattes. Any of the house-made coffee drinks are more profitable than pre-made or bottled," Detora wrote.

Because of Crossroads' relationship with the school, the cafe does not have to pay for rent, electricity, water or any other typical expenses that other businesses usually must shoulder. Labor and direct product cost are the café's two expenses, according to Detora.

Labor consists of three student managers and a large cast of baristas. A barista job at Crossroads is coveted on campus and the end of every semester sees a competitive hiring process, according to Murray.

"I've been working at Crossroads since my Sophomore year — I actually got rejected the first time," Murray wrote. "Since I was a freshman, I didn't realize being a barista was actually a very sought after position at Middlebury."

Despite the popularity of the barista position, its compensation according to the campus-wide wage scale system means that baristas do not earn tips or wages adjusted for rush times.

"I love the job but I wish that I earned more because it can get really busy and overwhelming, and two people is not enough to serve everyone," barista Athena Nooney '25 said. "It falls on us to make sure that everything is running smoothly, and we don't get fairly compensated for that."

Above the student managers, Assistant Manager of Retail Food Operations Andy Davidson is the ultimate authority on business matters.

"Andrew Davidson is our go-to and is our savior when our espresso machine is down, or we need help expediting a matcha order to the café," Murray wrote. "The three student managers handle hiring, scheduling, ordering, inventory, training, and so on."

The managers also communicate weekly with staff managers regarding administrative and back-of-house operations, Murray added, making their roles more labor-intensive than the student baristas.

Student and staff managers also collaborate to set the Crossroads prices. Despite the price increases in recent years, Murray said that the café has sold a robust number of drinks this fall and expects spring sales to be strong as well.

"We sold over 2,100 double shot lattes over the fall semester, with the chai latte following right behind… As we transition to the warmer months, we're expecting to see matcha sales increase a ton," she wrote.

Editor's Note: News Editor Evan Weiss '25 contributed reporting to this article.

ADDISON COUNTY COMMUNITIES PROTEST AGAINST PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING CUTS

By VIOLET WEXLER
Staff Writer

Residents of Vergennes, Vt. gathered in front of the Bixby Public Library on Saturday, April 12 to protest nationwide funding cuts to public libraries. President Donald Trump signed an executive order on March 14 significantly shrinking the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which provides critical funding for programs like interlibrary loans, grants and digital literacy initiatives. The Trump administration also called for the institute's elimination "to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law," and on March 31, the IMLS placed all of its approximately 70 employees on administrative leave.

Smaller, rural areas like Addison County will be hit particularly hard by cuts to this funding, as much of the annual $280 million in grants that the IMLS distributes to libraries and museums goes towards providing programming and services — such as library assistance for the blind, high-speed internet access or high school test prep — that do not otherwise exist in remote areas.

In response, communities in Vergennes and Montepelier have made their voices heard by organizing protests outside their local libraries. The Vergennes protest was organized by Vergennes resident Pat Lotz and a group of local women who attend virtual workshops hosted by Indivisible, a progressive organization dedicated to connecting individuals nationwide and empowering local action against the Trump administration. The workshops helped inspire the group to organize the protests.

"The things that Trump is cutting are very small portions of the federal budget, but a very large part of services that help people," Lotz said. "So we see what he's doing and, yeah, it hurts us. And so this is where we've gotta fight back."

Despite the rain on Saturday, protesters of all ages gathered together in Vergennes, with some even travelling in from Burlington. The group remained outside for nearly two hours and were supported by honks and cheers from passing cars.

Lotz shared specific information about the potential impacts of the funding cuts.

"Those grants affect the interlibrary transportation of books, which is a huge part of every library: sharing books and sharing information," Lotz told The Campus. "It's an efficient way for these libraries to work because not every small library can buy every book that they should have on the shelves."

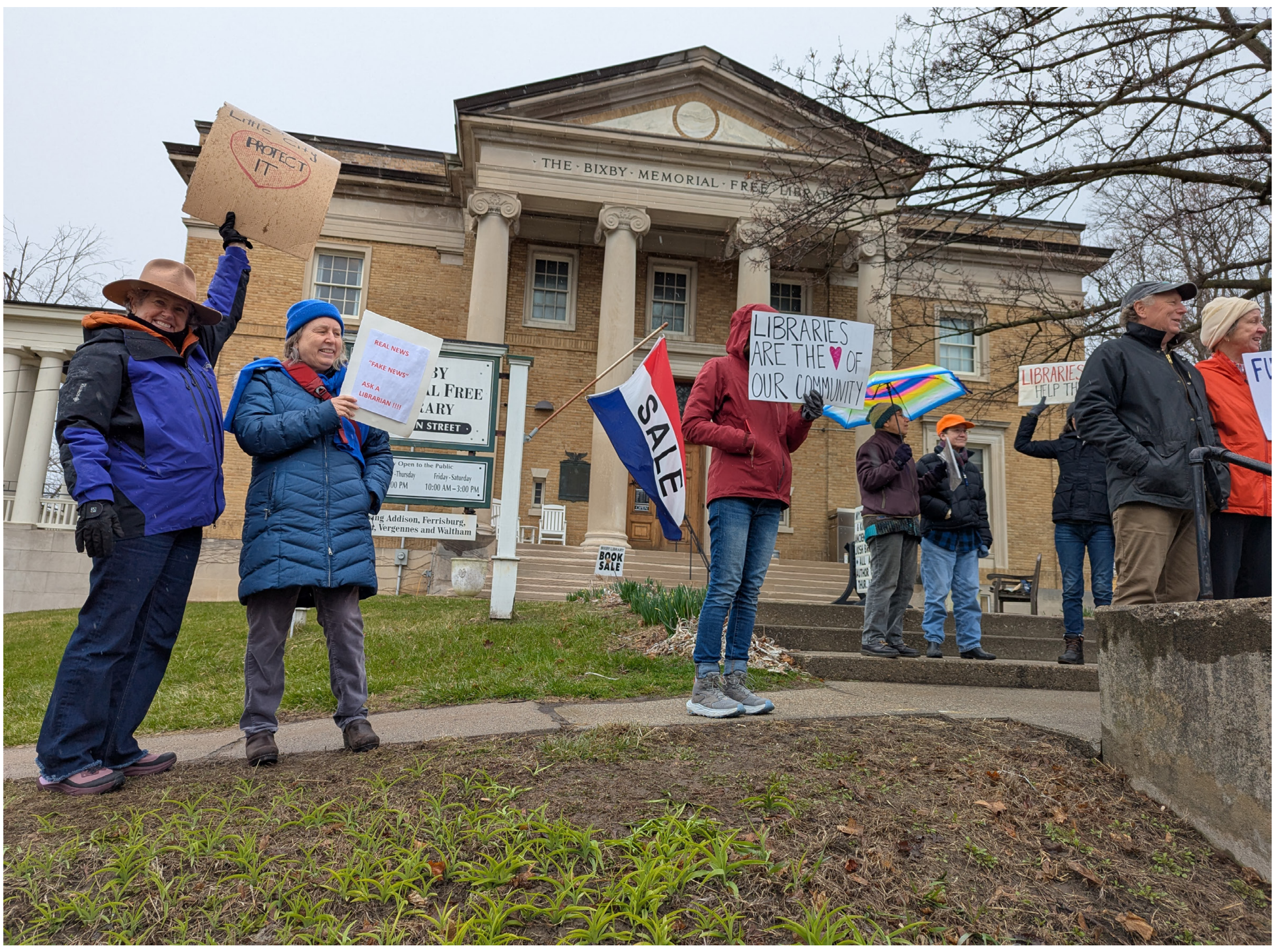
Digital literacy programs are also at risk. These programs help older adults learn computer and internet skills and provide access to computers for children who don't have them at home.

While Bixby Library was at the center of Saturday's protest, libraries across Vermont are feeling the impact of these cuts. The Ilsley Public Library in Middlebury is also facing challenges, according to Library Director Dana Hart. Although Ilsley receives less direct funding from IMLS than Bixby does, it still utilizes more modest grants from the agency for its summer programming. While Ilsley's concerns are not as immediate or severe, there is growing unease around how the cuts will impact the library's overall efficiency and services.

"With interlibrary loans, we could afford to pay the full courier cost if we had to," Hart said. "However, many, many libraries in Vermont could not afford to participate in the interlibrary loan system without support from the state. And so if the majority of libraries drop out of that program and there's only a few of us left, there's not much point."

As libraries navigate an uncertain future, community members can support them through donations, spreading awareness, contacting lawmakers or participating in public demonstrations like the one in Vergennes.

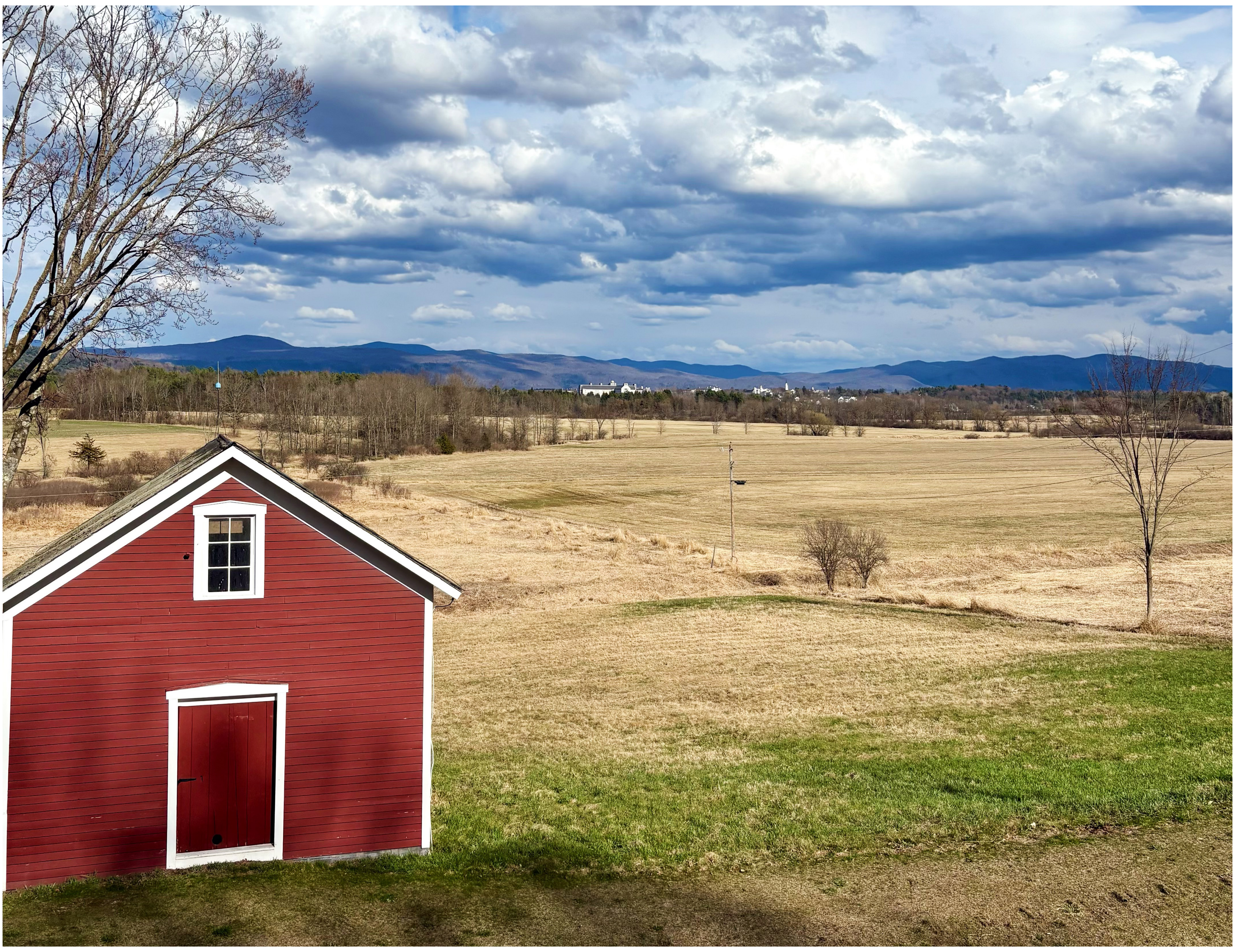
"Clearly, our nation's leadership doesn't understand the role that public libraries play in many many people's lives. And if we can communicate that clearly, the value that we place on it and why libraries are essential, I think being an advocate is the most that we can ask of our patrons. That's such a wonderful gift that community members can give us," Hart said.


THE BIXBY MEMORIAL FREE LIBRARY
PROTECT IT
LIBRARIES ARE THE ♥ OF OUR COMMUNITY
SALE
BOOK SALE

COURTESY PHOTO / PAT LOTZ

Residents in Vergennes and across Vermont protested President Trump's executive order cutting federal library funding.

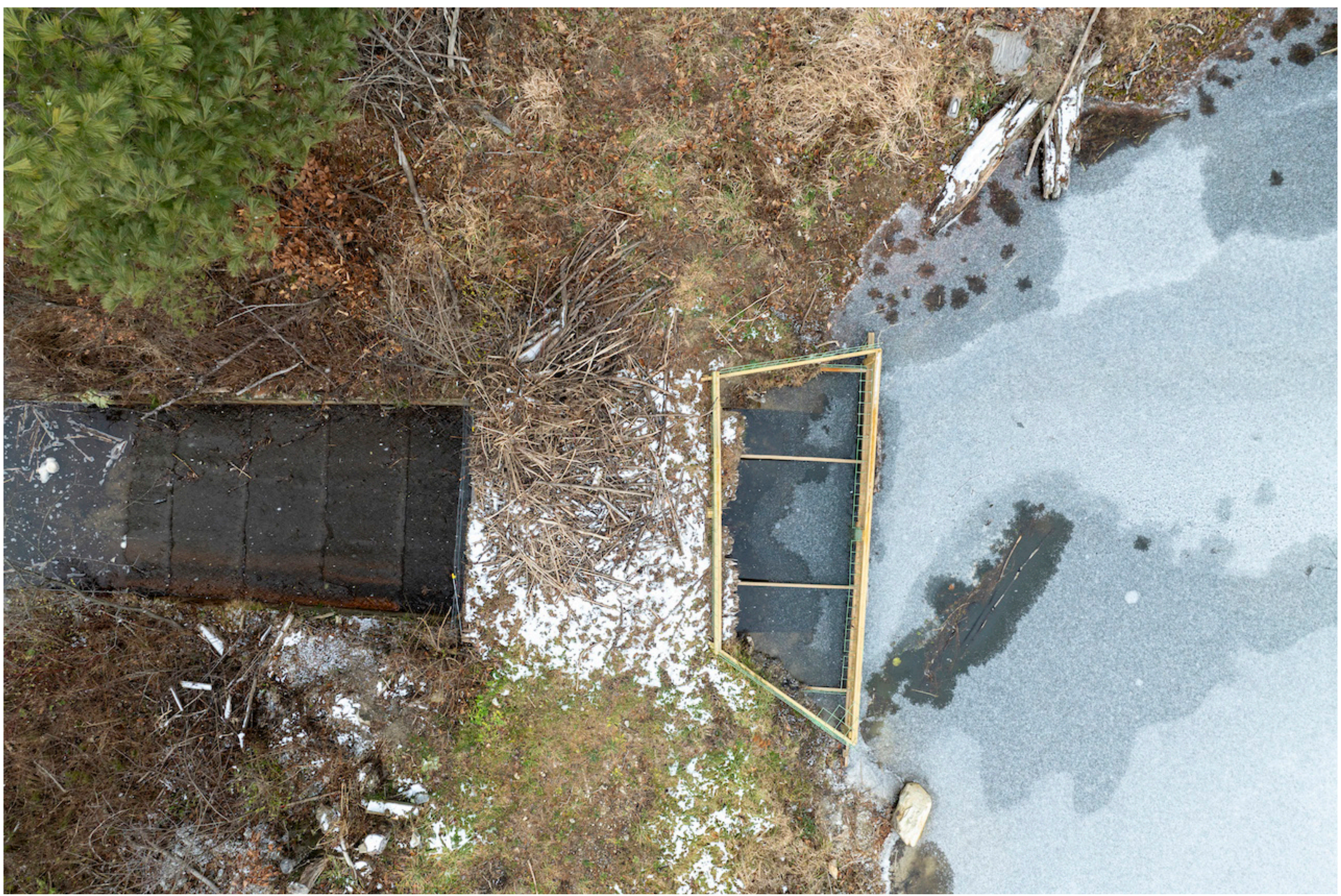
Photo of the Week: A view from James Road



MAGGIE BRYAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

PLAN TO REMOVE BEAVERS FROM STATE-OWNED DAMS SPARKS CONCERNS

By RYAN McELROY
Editor in Chief



COURTESY PHOTO / CALEB KENNA

Aerial view of a man-made dam in Addison County with a functional beaver deceiver attached. The Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife has disputed the efficacy of non-lethal management methods, instead planning to trap beavers at state-owned dams.

COURTESY PHOTO / BEVERLEY SOYCHAK

An up-close photo of a local dam in Addison County that allows water to flow through regularly.

COURTESY PHOTO / PUTNEY PICS

A beaver swimming in the river. Damned if you do, damned if you don't — either way, it's all about dams for Vermont Fish and Wildlife.

Vermont is weighing a controversial plan to trap and remove beavers from 21 state-owned dams in order to mitigate blockages and ensure infrastructural integrity.

The Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife hosted two public information sessions in Montpelier, Vt. and Middlebury last week to share their plans with the public. Attendees questioned the state's intention to move forward in removing the beavers without further community input, while others pointed to non-lethal methods that may be more cost-effective and practical than traps.

Representatives of the state have said that the roughly 100 dams owned by Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources would be affected by new rules created in response to Act 161, which passed in 2018. The Department of Environmental Conservation says the law requires the agency to address dam safety by modifying the structures, trapping and killing nearby beavers, or removing the animal's debris.

"Beavers are a keystone species," Bree Furfey, a wildlife biologist with Vermont Fish & Wildlife said at the meeting on April 10. "They can create these wetlands that are actually homes for several other different species, and so they really help to create biodiversity."

Despite their ecological benefit, the state has identified trapping and killing beavers as the only effective remedy to prevent beaver-induced build up around Vermont-owned dams that it says causes excessively high water levels, potentially contributing to floods. Affected areas under the current plan will include the popular Bristol Pond in Monkton, Vt.

Several officials from the department shared that modifying state-owned dams would have to be a long-term consideration due to the high costs associated with any changes. Representatives stated that short-term options of inaction, relocation and regularly removing debris would not address the problem, although they left the idea of modifying the dam structures open for future consideration.

"There are options there, we just have to come up with the money and as the estimates go, it's only going to get more and more expensive," explained David Sausville, a wildlife management program manager who spoke at the meeting.

Beverly Soychak, co-founder of the Vermont Beavers Association — an organization which aims to educate people on non-lethal beaver management — said she was disappointed by the state's approach to managing its dams after attending the public information meeting in Middlebury.

"I think there's some false information that was shared out at that meeting about beaver deceivers and their efficacy," Soychak told The Campus in an interview. "We have to do what Vermonters want to do, not what Fish and Wildlife wants to do. They haven't even looked at other solutions."

Beaver deceivers are a non-lethal device made by a company based in Grafton, Vt. that can be installed in dams to allow water flow and promote biodiversity without disrupting beavers' ability to thrive in Vermont's waterways. Officials at the public information meeting had previously panned beaver deceivers as a possible long-term solution to modify state-owned infrastructure.

"When you start getting some inflow and you need to get that water out, that's when the beaver deceivers and those kinds of techniques are not as effective," Steve Hanna, a dam safety engineer with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) said at the meeting.

Skip Lisle, the founder of Beaver Deceiver International Co., said that he was concerned beaver deceivers were being maligned by the proceeding, since he has successfully used the deceiver on man-made dams, contrary to what the state has suggested.

"Beaver deceivers are unique to my company, and it does a lot of harm to tell the world inaccurately that they do not work at man-made dams. I've used them at hundreds of work sites around the country," Lisle said at the meeting. He added that the state should use the terms flow device or baffle instead of beaver deceiver in its work and presentation.

Soychak said she worried the recent spate of flooding that devastated Vermont in the summers of 2023 and 2024 have unfairly led to scapegoating beavers for flood damage.

"It's my personal belief that the flash flooding has brought this issue to the forefront the past two years," Soychak said, adding that removing beavers will not be a long-term solution to safeguard against flooding. "If a flash flood is going to take out a mountain, how is a dam ever going to stop it?"

She added that in Monkton, Vt., where she lives, local dams have seven beaver-deceivers and did not see catastrophic flooding the last two summers.

Another audience member who spoke at the meeting said he believed the state should sell licenses to local trappers for the beavers on the dams, providing a potential revenue source for the state.

"That's a cost-generator that could replace the cost of my tax dollars," he told the group. "If we're short on cash, why not get paid by someone to solve the problem instead of paying somebody to get rid of the problem?"

His idea was not echoed by other people in attendance at the meeting, who were largely against lethal trapping methods.

"What measures are going to be taken so that recreators and their animals are not going to be harmed or caught in its traps?" a third audience member asked.

Fish & Wildlife and the Agency of Natural Resources did not answer these questions asked by attendees; the third-party moderator instead wrote them down to be answered in two months via a written report. The moderator also corrected people who offered statements rather than asking questions during the forum on Thursday.

"These were public information sessions and not official public meetings. Staff will review and respond to the public's questions in a responsiveness summary, but feedback will not be incorporated into the Dam Safety Rules," Stephanie Brackin, communications director for ANR wrote in an email to The Campus.

Audience members expressed frustration with the meeting set-up, which they felt deflected responsibility for the changes from the Department of Fish & Wildlife.

"The bottom line is I don't think that was a democratic process," Soychak explained in an interview. "This was Fish & Wildlife's way of not listening to the other side of the debate."

After The Campus provided a list of questions to Vermont Fish & Wildlife related to beaver management, a program manager at the department sent an email that the agency members needed to coordinate their response on the matter to ensure consistent messaging to the public.

"These are the same questions asked as the meeting and I want our response to be the same as our summary document. We don't need them playing slight word changes against us," the staff member wrote to everyone included on the email.

Following that message, Furfey declined to comment to The Campus, stating that she could not answer questions in a timely manner without consulting the Vermont Department of Environmental Conversation (DEC).

"In general, Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife strives to have a healthy beaver population… which [the] habitat can support and what the public will tolerate," Furfey wrote. "The DEC rule is strictly at manmade dams. This will not impact the state's beaver population."

While the state continues to move forward with its plan to trap beavers, local environmental advocates urge them to reverse course and engage with criticisms of the lethal population control methods.

"We want to bring the temperature down and work together on this, because that's the only way this is going to get done," Soychak said. "Some really tough conversations need to be had, and we're not getting that right now."

The Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife has said it will release a "written responsiveness summary" responding to the solicited questions by June 1.

BUDGET CUTS AND BROKEN PROMISES: HOW HIDDLEBURY'S FINANCIAL DEFICIT WILL IMPACT STUDENTS

Op-Ed

***Freddi Mitchell** and **Josh Harkins** are members of the class of 2025.*

ANNA HOHWÜ-CHRISTENSEN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Staff members at the college perform essential functions around campus, but many will see their retirement benefits cut next year.

In an April 2 email to students, faculty and staff explaining Middlebury's budget conundrum and laying out proposed changes to cut costs, Interim President Steve Synder, Provost Michelle McCauley and Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration David Provost wrote, "The student experience will only be strengthened by these moves."

Respectfully, "Our Way Forward" will do the opposite of what the college promised. While we recognize the need to solve budget deficits and appreciate the sentiment of supporting the student experience, attributing a strengthened student experience to maintaining high enrollment while reducing the size of the college workforce and simultaneously ignoring the uncertainty of adequately addressing challenges posed by major sources of Middlebury's deficit, such as the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS), is misleading.

We appreciate the intricacies of the budget and the pressures facing the Board of Trustees, but we disagree that budget cuts will strengthen the student experience. As Lily Buren '26 noted in a recent op-ed, the budget cuts will have serious ramifications for faculty and staff at Middlebury that will ultimately impact students.

With these challenges to the student experience in mind, we encourage students to think critically about how the college can address the budget deficit while speaking up for ourselves, faculty and staff. As students, we have the power to express how these changes affect us and ask questions to those who have the answers and decision-making power. So, speak with your friends about this topic. Check in with your professors about their perspectives. Think about how the potential of increased enrollment and decreased staffing will affect your experience.

We find serious issues with the administration's view that maintaining high enrollment to 2,600–2,650 students without increasing staff or faculty will strengthen the student experience. Our first gripe is with the fact that current enrollment is and continues to be elevated far beyond the range the administration has suggested. The classes of 2028 and 2028.5 enrolled 700 total students. At this rate, which is consistent with the proposed enrollment increase to 700–720 students per class, total enrollment would permanently stabilize at 2,800 students in the next four years. If courses were overenrolled and students were forced to live at the Bread Loaf campus and Inn on the Green during the Covid-19 period with enrollment this high, how can we not expect the same blows to the student experience going forward?

One of the hallmarks of the small liberal arts college experience is the personal connection that professors build with their students. These connections will continue to be made more challenging by a refusal to increase faculty count as student enrollment remains elevated.

While the plan to close the budget gap does not explicitly call for faculty and staff layoffs or cuts to their main salaries, the inclusion of a retirement incentive for Vermont-based staff signals an intent to reduce the workforce by 40 to 50 employees overall. Such a proposal means that dining services staff, librarians, academic coordinators and facilities staff who support the day-to-day lives of students will leave and not be replaced, further burdening the staff that continue in their roles, reducing the quality of services critical to the student experience offered by Middlebury.

If the college plans to reduce the workforce whilst also intending to increase student enrollment at a time in which understaffing existed and contributed negatively to student life at current enrollment levels, how can they pretend to say that the student experience will be strengthened further?

The uncertainty posed by entities external to Middlebury's Vermont campus makes the focus on maintaining high enrollment and reducing the workforce of the Vermont campus even more alarming. While the Language Schools contribute positive revenue to the college, $8.7 million of the $14.1 deficit is attributable to a lack of enrollment at MIIS. While Middlebury faces budgetary pressure from the Vermont campus in addition to the pressure from MIIS, the Monterey campus has continuously posed challenges since its inception. Why should students, faculty and staff on the Vermont campus, the core institution of Middlebury College, pay the price for an institution that does not turn a profit?

We simply cannot rely on a four-year plan to save MIIS twenty years after the college first attempted to save Monterey from its already existing financial hardship. Middlebury's relationship to its graduate school is a classic example of the sunk cost fallacy the two of us were taught in our introductory microeconomics coursework. Frankly, it's insulting to attempt to funnel Middlebury undergraduates into graduate programs at MIIS while admitting that the institute is in financial shambles.

The hypocrisy of claiming that these measures will strengthen the student experience proves there is a better way forward. If Middlebury's mission is to inspire its students to "grapple with challenging questions," the institution itself must prove it can grapple with its own challenging questions. Is putting MIIS on life support with the uncertain goal of reversing years of financial misfortune the best way forward? Or should the college consider cutting MIIS loose in an effort to focus on the budget challenges facing the Vermont campus?

Middlebury needs to be honest about the impact that decreasing the staff workforce will have on student life. If the college's mission statement promises "a strong foundation in the liberal arts," Middlebury must focus on supporting faculty, staff and students at its liberal arts institution in Vermont. Such a foundation is built around a learning community that is tight-knit, fostering relationships between faculty, staff and students, rather than a larger student body, which furthers the community crisis of increasingly burdened faculty and staff.

If Middlebury promises "an inclusive, residential environment," the college must acknowledge that an increase in enrollment coupled with a reduction in the workforce will hamper the ability to prove such an experience to students. The college must respect its promises to students and be honest about the impacts of future promises it makes.

ONE MORE PITCH FOR THE CAMPUS

Op-Ed

Maggie Reynolds *is a member of the class of 2024 and former Editor in Chief.*

When I began at Middlebury in fall 2020, I was certain I would major in history, be on the swim team for four years and join a political group on campus. I did indeed study history, but instead of my latter two plans, however, by my junior and senior years, I was spending dozens of hours a week in the Hepburn Hall basement writing breaking news stories, fact-checking op-eds and arguing with my co-editors over front page layout.

And it was undoubtedly the best decision I made during my time at Middlebury.

I urge you to put aside any preexisting ideas you may have about the need for high school journalism experience to join The Campus, or the tediousness of adding more writing assignments on top of your academic coursework. And allow me, a washed-up former Editor in Chief of The Middlebury Campus, to make one last pitch for the merits of our weekly paper.

I had zero journalism experience when I agreed to write my first Campus story — a profile of the Swift House Inn's new owners — in October 2020. Of course, I had some initial hiccups learning what questions to ask in interviews, how to properly quote sources and how to best structure a news story. But with the guidance of the then-Campus editors and some repetition of the writing process, I was able to get the hang of the whole reporting thing and move my way up the Campus ladder. Let me serve as proof that anyone with a willingness to learn, an interest in the broader Middlebury community and the ability to badger people can serve an important role on The Campus.

The Middlebury student body — or, at least, The Campus' Editorial Board — has noted that on-campus student organization involvement has declined since the Covid-19 pandemic. I won't speculate on why student government or musical group participation may have decreased, but I will argue that there is no valid reason for interest in The Campus to be diminishing. At an institution whose ethos is "Knowledge and Virtue," where over half of students study writing or humanities-related majors (according to Zeitgeist 6.0), there should be a surplus of students wanting to write for The Campus. The newspaper is the ideal place for liberal arts-focused Middlebury students to sharpen their writing and communication skills and have a direct role in the college community.

As a first year or sophomore finding friends and interests at Middlebury, The Campus provides an opportunity for writers to get to know people and departments at the college to which they might never have been exposed otherwise. During my early days on The Campus, I interviewed the owner of the beloved local institution Mister Up's, spoke with students who took a semester off during the pandemic and listened to economic challenges faced by various college staff members. This reporting ignited my passion for the Local section of The Campus and introduced me to students, staff and community members with important stories to tell. Writing for the newspaper is a unique chance for students to gain a broader understanding of the college community they will call home for four years and exercise their voice in that community.

I have heard numerous students say that they are interested in pursuing a career in writing, or even in journalism, yet they choose not to be involved in The Campus for one reason or another. Trust me — you will be hard-pressed to find another inroad to journalism that is as accessible and has such tangible community impacts as The Campus.

The Middlebury student body makes up nearly one-third of the population of the town of Middlebury. Thanks in part to this fact, The Campus is ideally suited to have a finger on the pulse of potential stories from administrators, faculty, staff, students and community members, and report on behalf of these groups. For example, over the past 18 months, The Campus broke the stories of a major ruling in the litigation over the removal of the Mead name from The Chapel, misuse of college funds by the Middlebury College Activities Board and divestment negotiations between college administrators and the pro-Gaza encampment student organizers. And, more broadly, the newspaper exists within the distinctively intimate and innovative Vermont news ecosystem, allowing The Campus to learn from (and compete against) the state's well-respected professional newspapers.

Now 11 months out from my graduation, I have had ample time to reflect on my time at Middlebury. Amidst my memories of magical fall foliage at the Snow Bowl, long Proc meals-turned giggle sessions with friends and late spring Dunmore swims, The Campus is what I most often find myself thinking about from my time at Middlebury. If for nothing else, give The Campus a chance so you can try a different style of writing and learn a little bit more about the Middlebury community. And who knows — it might also bring you your best friends, new career aspirations and an emotional attachment to the Hepburn Hall basement.

MAGGIE REYNOLDS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Last year's Executive Team included Maggie Reynolds '25 as Editor in Chief and Katie Futterman '24 and Ryan McElroy '25 as Managing Editors. Reynolds led The Campus' live coverage of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment last May, pictured above.

IT'S TIME TO DITCH MONTEREY

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

The Middlebury Campus

Susanna Schatz

On Wednesday April 2, the college announced that it is planning to cut at least $10 million from its annual budget by reducing faculty and staff retirement benefits and increasing student enrollment. In their statement, they laid out three guiding principles: minimizing disruption to the workforce, simplifying organizational structures and strengthening the student experience.

It is difficult not to see the irony here. The email's guiding principles are a farcical contradiction when faculty and staff are the key component of our experiences as students.

Actions speak louder than emails, and Middlebury needs to act to correct its financial deficits and to restore the promised benefits to its long-term faculty and staff members. In our brief survey of the college's finances, we found ourselves hard-pressed to even guess at why Middlebury continues pouring its resources into the Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS) at the expense of its Vermont employees.

It's time for the Board of Trustees to admit an unpleasant truth: Purchasing Monterey in 2005 was a mistake. With its perennial deficits and ever-extended financial plans, the institute is an anchor on our undergraduate college that threatens to drag down the Vermont campus. It's simple: Let's ditch MIIS.

Middlebury must immediately take steps to divest from its Monterey graduate program. The satellite campus in California only burdens the college's finances and distracts our leaders from focusing on the undergraduate liberal arts experience — the whole reason we're even attending this college.

As the op-eds we have published over the past two weeks have reiterated, the budget cuts targeting Vermont faculty and staff are a slap in the face to the people who have never been to Monterey and never supported its acquisition in the first place. The college's inability to make a pivot toward financial stability by admitting defeat on its California campus contradicts the open-minded, liberal arts attitude it preaches to us as students.

We need to confront the fundamental issue of what Middlebury College should be: Is it a small, residential liberal arts college nestled into the Green Mountains or a large, globe-spanning institution that prioritizes money over Middlebury undergraduates?

The Board of Trustees and prior Middlebury presidents have had their say on Monterey and the college's identity. Now time for the rest of us to take a turn. A collective call from the faculty, staff and students of the undergraduate college may be the only way to pressure our leaders into admitting past mistakes and getting rid of MIIS. The recent Student Government Association (SGA) presidential election was unexpectedly dominated by conversations about Monterey and a potential referendum; students have begun to show that they are outraged and unwilling to make the sacrifices in their education for Monterey. Now is the time to build on that raw emotion.

After all, why should we be expected to give anything up for Monterey? None of our current student body had a say in acquiring the poorly performing graduate school, and faculty and staff who remember the acquisition 20 years ago didn't have much sway over the decision either. Only a few Middlebury students study away at MIIS each semester, which hardly justifies the $8.7 million deficit Monterey contributed this year. Based on the school's consistent under-enrollment and difficulty attracting students, it seems that not even prospective graduate school students want to attend Monterey.

Students in Vermont aren't the only ones suffering in the name of a second-rate graduate program thousands of miles away. The college's decision has betrayed faculty and staff, cutting the retirement benefits and likely their healthcare plans that they have earned through decades of work on our main campus. Worst of all, in cutting benefits and offering buyouts, our community members have essentially been told that they are the driving force behind the college's deficit.

Of course, the real financial liability at the college isn't the people who teach overcrowded chemistry lectures or who bake zucchini bread in Proctor every week. Monterey is the reason our student-faculty ratio will go up, why over-enrollment is here to stay and how the administration will likely justify future spending cuts.

The college's plan to pump its student body for cash by raising enrollment projections exposes institutional hypocrisy on multiple fronts. Admitting more students to classes without increasing the number of faculty and staff — aiming to decrease their numbers, in fact — creates more labor for the people who facilitate our highly-regarded liberal arts education. By incentivizing many Vermont-based staff who are at least 55 years of age to retire early, there will be less support for the increasing number of students. This places a larger burden on staff and faculty. and it goes without saying that this will certainly not improve the student experience.

Middlebury has already taken extreme measures in the past to alleviate housing shortages on campus while maintaining a high enrollment, even offering first year students to spend their first semester in Copenhagen in fall 2023 and offering a $10,000 stipend for upperclassmen to take a semester off. Looking ahead at an even higher enrollment count, we question the future of housing on our campus while the college plows ahead with higher and higher enrollment goals.

The college's leadership and the Board of Trustees are abdicating their responsibility to students, faculty and staff, and the future of this institution by harming the daily student experience and long-term composition of our faculty and staff communities. The college's decision to drop $50 million on an unpopular and unnecessary museum to replace Battell Hall — on top of $10 million renovating Johnson Memorial Museum and other large-scale investments in random campus buildings — now looks especially dubious given the financial headwinds we face.

It is true that Middlebury is in a deficit that needs to be addressed. But our school should not be willing to take stab after stab at its home campus before it addresses the simple truth that Monterey may never get its act together. There is a fundamental disconnect between Middlebury as an institution and Middlebury as a community of undergraduate students, faculty and staff.

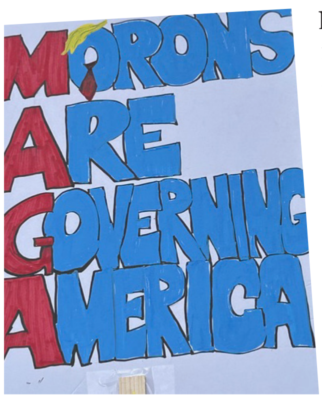
It is time the college retreats from the coasts of California to hear our voices right here in Vermont.

MIDDLEBURY MAY BE NEXT ON TRUMP'S CHOPPING BLOCK

Letter to the Editor

Gillian Goodman *is a member of the class of 1984.*

According to a recent piece by The Campus' editorial board called "Middlebury may be next on Trump's chopping block. What now?", Middlebury College is one of 60 schools who received a letter warning them of antisemitism investigations on campus. Following the pattern of the Trump administration's threats to Columbia and other universities, a place on this list may mean the college will be targeted by the Trump administration for potential cuts to its federal funding. As a 1984 grad, The Campus is not part of my daily reading routine. However, I was motivated by national headlines related to other colleges and universities to take a look, and felt curious to know how Middlebury is navigating the storm. Thankfully, The Campus did not disappoint.



I appreciated learning about necessary ICE preparedness measures on campus, sad and disturbing as they are. I visited Somerville, Ma. the first week of March, and stayed blocks from the intersection where Tufts University graduate student, Rumeysa Ozturk, was surrounded by masked government agents in broad daylight, taken into custody and unlawfully detained. Despite an emergency order filed in Boston District Court forbidding Ms. Ozturk's removal from Massachusetts, she landed in an ICE detention facility in Alexandria, La., much like Columbia University student Mahmoud Khalil and Georgetown University Postdoctoral Fellow Badar Khan Suri. I can only imagine their ongoing terror and hope no Middlebury student is subjected to anything remotely similar.

I strongly urge Middlebury to remain true to its liberal educational mission, ideals and spirit. My view, one hopefully shared by many, is that the college should tap into its significant endowment before bending to unconscionable extortion and threats to fall in line with the MAGA agenda. I urge this as a consistent, albeit modest, donor to Middlebury's "For Every Future" fundraising campaign.

The Campus' editorial touched on Middlebury's commitment to maintaining a learning environment in which all students feel safe, regardless of their disparate views. I support that commitment. At the same time, I am deeply offended and appalled by a Trump administration that wants to cloak its racist, xenophobic and unconstitutional policies in the guise of protecting Jewish students on college campuses. I'm no longer a college student, of course, but I'm Jewish, and I refuse to be a pawn of this administration. I urge current Jewish students and Jewish alumni to join me in a full-throated resistance to this manipulation. "Protecting" Jewish students to justify silencing, terrorizing and deporting others is a disgusting affront to our Jewish values and beliefs such as Umot Ha'Olam and Hochai'ach Tochee'ach. The first of these values signifies caring for and respecting those with other religions, beliefs and identities, and the latter represents having the courage to rebuke society or individuals making terrible mistakes. Much like objecting to the Netanyahu government's genocide in Gaza, none of us should tolerate behavior that is, frankly, antithetical to precious Jewish tenets. We will not be made a pretext for vile policy.

AMERICA, YOU IN DANGER GIRL!
SOCIAL SECU
Every Day

COURTESY PHOTOS / GILLIAN GOODMAN

Signs from a recent "Hands Off" protest on April 5 in Denver.

Middlebury, please don't fall for the spin of a game show host. Please continue to do the hard, complex work required to uphold Middlebury's values during the current political and economic tumult.

I do not take for granted my opportunity and right to express these views publicly. Thank you.

The Middlebury Campus

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More information about the paper and its submission policies can be found online at www.middleburycampus.com.

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The Middlebury Campus

THE PRAGMATIC REASONS FOR MIDDLEBURY TO DO THE ‘RIGHT THING’

Op-Ed

This op-ed has been written and signed by 12 senior faculty members in the Economics department.

RYAN MCELROY / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Interim President Steve Snyder and several administators who work in Old Chapel recently announced cuts to retirement benefits for faculty and staff members in order to correct a $14.1 million annual budget deficit.

It is no secret that Middlebury underpays its faculty and staff relative to comparable institutions. But have you heard that the benefits are really good? For faculty and staff who joined the college before 2017, the college contributes 15% of their salary to their retirement fund each year once they hit the age of 45. This is an unheard-of rate, but it helps offset the much smaller salaries our faculty earn compared to peer institutions. Middlebury’s salaries for associate and full professors — the groups most affected by this announcement — place us near the bottom quartile of Middlebury’s peers, many of which, including Amherst, Bowdoin, Colgate, Pomona, Washington & Lee, Wesleyan, and Williams, pay 10–16% more than Middlebury.

The administration has always billed it as such: Sure, you earn less now, but you’ll retire with more. Whenever the issue of low salaries has come up, we’ve been told that we must consider the entire compensation package instead. As the Vice President for Academic Affairs at the time told our colleague when he interviewed for a position almost three decades ago, the salary is terrible, but the benefits are amazing!

Indeed, this was an essential component of the cost-benefit analysis that many of us made when deciding between job offers. We’d have less in our checking accounts during our working years, requiring that we save less outside our 401(k), but the explicit promise was that the college’s retirement contributions would partially offset this. In 2017, the cracks started to show. Middlebury College announced that it would offer an 11%, rather than 15%, match for new hires, but those of us who had already been promised this benefit had been grandfathered into the old system. This was, the administration wrote at the time, “simply the right thing to do.”

Now the college has apparently decided that doing what is right is no longer a compelling motive, and pulled the rug out from under all of us who had been working for a lower salary under the promise of this future benefit. Those of us who are nearing retirement will now find ourselves with thousands less contributed to their 401(k)s at a time when the stock markets are also highly volatile. Those of us who were about to hit 45 and age into the 15% plan will lose out on those thousands every year for 20–25 years, easily translating into hundreds of thousands dollars less at retirement. As one colleague put it, this is the equivalent of the college burning down your house. Even though faculty and staff have upheld their end of the bargain, spending their careers investing in the institution at a lower salary, Middlebury has reneged on its promise — and in doing so has engendered such a deep sense of betrayal that it now threatens to pull apart the fabric of the institution to which we have devoted our careers.

It probably doesn’t take an economist to tell you that a primary human motive is reciprocity — people are willing to make sacrifices for those who do right by us and punish those who betray us or violate social norms. This has especially significant implications for labor market interactions; since effort can’t be contractually compelled in most workplaces, employers must rely on intrinsic motivation. And it is hard to imagine a profession that relies so thoroughly on intrinsic motivation as tenured faculty. Our institution functions (and maintains its reputation) only so long as its faculty and staff members are willing to put in tremendous effort and make place-specific investments that go well beyond what is required for their salaries.

If you want to motivate effort in this environment, what do you do? You foster loyalty and intrinsic motivation by helping employees feel valued and cultivating a shared sense of identity. You show that you have their backs, even — especially — when times are hard. You offer benefits beyond the minimum.

What do you not do? This. When employees are betrayed, their commitment to the community is subverted, with real consequences. This is exactly why firms resist lowering wages even during downturns — it is universally accepted that workers will view this as unfair, and it will have such a damaging effect on morale that it will not be in the firm’s financial interest. (The canonical reference here is perhaps Truman Bewley’s 2002 book, “Why Wages Don’t Fall During A Recession.”) In contrast, in our time here we have seen low salaries used to subsidize Middlebury’s poor financial decision-making for years and they seem to be a primary target whenever times are tight. The betrayal goes beyond the people whose retirements have been slashed and quakes the trust of the entire institution.

The email we received announcing the cuts also said “The student experience will only be strengthened by these moves.” How could this be? Critically, the student experience at Middlebury also depends on a shared sense of community. This manifests itself every time a faculty or staff member spends some of their weekend cheering on a student athlete, or returns in the evening to bolster the sagging spirits of a struggling thesis writer, or attends an advisee’s dance or music performance. Our community here shows up in every one of a thousand after-hours and beyond-the-letter-of-any-contract examples of devotion to our community. The student experience is threatened when trustees and administrators treat this college like a business in which culture and trust and respect don’t matter.

This is a watershed moment in the college’s history, as it now faces a major crisis of morale of its own doing at the same time that we face external threats to higher education. If this decision is allowed to stand, and the college does not act swiftly to “make whole” the affected employees and repair the breach of trust, we will not only lose staff and faculty to other employers, but also the hearts of those who stay. Both of these outcomes will have a devastating impact on our students and the entire college community.

Are we already there? We hope not. We are not yet willing to give up on our students and colleagues, we still believe in Middlebury College and we are prepared to fight to convince the institution to recommit to its promises and the people who have given their all to this place. As an initial action, we pledge not to participate in college-wide events until the decision has been reversed or a plan to mitigate the damage has been implemented. We hope other colleagues will join us. This includes boycotting commencement, a decision that we don’t make lightly. We will enthusiastically celebrate our students and their accomplishments at departmental events, but we cannot don our robes and represent the college under these circumstances.

We ask everyone — employees, students and alumni — who believe that Middlebury’s strength is in its people to sign our petition (go/savethebenefits/). Any employees who wish to be involved in collective action or legal action can sign up for an email list (go/joinus/) to coordinate our efforts.

If you are one of the 622 faculty and staff who are affected by this change: join us.

If you are one of the 800 faculty and staff who are not directly impacted by this particular change but now fear that any promises the college has or will make to you will not be honored in the future: join us.

If you are a Middlebury student who values their professors and staff members — and also hopes to feel pride when they tell people in the decades to come that they went to Middlebury College: join us.

If you are a member of the Senior Leadership Group who knows better than most the intricacies of the financial straits we are in, but also knows that betraying the promises made to the people who drive this institution is morally and pragmatically wrong: join us.

If you are a member of the Board of Trustees and you want Middlebury to remain an elite “top 20” institution: join us.

Protecting faculty and staff benefits is not just, as the administration so aptly put it eight years ago, the “right thing to do”; it is the self-interested choice for anyone who wishes this institution to survive and thrive.

Signed,

Andrea Robbett, Professor of Economics and Department Chair

Jeff Carpenter, James Jermain Professor of Political Economy

Peter Hans Matthews, Charles A. Dana Professor of Economics

Caitlin Myers, John G. McCullough Professor of Economics

Will Pyle, Frederick C. Dirks Professor of International Economics

Paul Sommers, Paige-Wright Professor of Economics

Cihan Artunc, Associate Professor of Economics

Julia Berazneva, Associate Professor of Economics

Tanya Byker, Associate Professor of Economics

Erick Gong, Associate Professor of Economics

Amanda Gregg, Associate Professor of Economics

David Munro, Associate Professor of Economics

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

The Campus accepts submissions of opinions, reflections and letters to the editor from all members of our community, every week. Pieces from students, staff and faculty are all welcomed for consideration.

Email us at campus@middlebury.edu with your submissions!

"GREASE" IS THE WORD!

By ZIYING JIAN
Contributing Writer

The Middlebury College Musical Theater Club's rendition of the musical "Grease" left everyone in Town Hall Theater (THT) "Hopelessly Devoted" to the talented cast and crew this past weekend.

The club captured the vibrant energy of 1950s rock 'n' roll with their spring musical, which ran from April 10–12. Despite managing one of their largest productions to date, MCMT showcased remarkable skill in directing a sizable cast while delivering flawless renditions of the iconic soundtrack and perfectly executed technical transitions.

Grease follows the romance between greaser Danny Zuko (Graeme Evans '28) and transfer student Sandy Dumbrowski (Campbell Keller '26). In the wake of a summer fling between the two, Sandy unexpectedly enrolls at Danny's school, Rydell High. As they both try various strategies to win each other over, their journey is complicated by social pressures from their respective friend groups — Danny's Burger Palace Boys and Sandy's new friends, the Pink Ladies.

The musical is characterized by humorous quips and plot devices, hormonal teenagers, unspoken feelings, flashy dance moves with just as flashy jealousy and the right amount of drama. The secondary storylines centering other Rydell students add depth to this iconic tale of teenage love and identity in 1950s America. The energetic atmosphere was further brought to life by these supporting characters who each delivered standout performances.

Marty (Annalise Houghton '28) commanded the first half of the show, delivering one-liners with an unshakable accent that gave the audience a taste of the humor to come. Roger (Nathan Bernazzani '27) and Jan (Regan Boord '27) portrayed the vibrant cross-group romance that felt natural from their first scene together. Doody (Jonathan Mount '25.5) and Frenchy (Patrice Cahill '25.5) put their co-president chemistry on full display with eclectic flipturns and perfectly synchronized dance routines, naturally drawing the audience's attention whenever they appeared on stage.

"Finding those places to color in [Doody] and how that deepens the dynamic with Patrice's character, Frenchy, was really fun to explore," Mount told The Campus.

The story culminates at the school dance, enhanced by creative staging elements, strategic spotlight work, and the charismatic presence of Vince Fontaine (Max Blumenthal '27) as the event's energetic announcer.

The musical numbers were nothing short of breathtaking, as a mix of technical prowess alongside raw vocal power showcased the production's ability to balance humor with poignant moments. I particularly enjoyed the dramatic lighting in "Alone at the Drive-In Movie," performed by Evans and featuring the Burger Palace Boys, who used flashlights to heighten the tension of the scene against a dark blue backdrop.

"There Are Worse Things I Could Do," a solo performance by Betty Rizzo (Jamie Schwartz '27), was accompanied by soft, orange lighting which enhanced the soulful vulnerability of the moment, helping audiences develop sympathy for the tough leader of the Pink Ladies.

The production team largely preserved the original script, making only minimal changes. However, they did reinterpret some character motivations and personalities to add depth where the script felt underdeveloped to not risk falling into two-dimensional tropes.

Despite working with a limited budget for set design, the production team displayed impressive resourcefulness in building and sourcing set pieces. One standout example was Kenickie's car, built by Quinn Donaldson '26.5, who also played the character.

"He has basically been the uncredited assistant set designer for the past two shows," Mount noted. "When he's not onstage, he's back there building and drilling the car back together."

Special recognition was also given to Technical Director of the THT Stefan Örn Arnarson for contributing materials and constructing the distinctive checkered floorboard pattern.

The show featured a large number of first years in the cast, which was an exciting aspect of the annual spring production. Since fall productions cast only returning students, the spring show represents the first opportunity for freshmen to audition, and the new talent certainly didn't disappoint.

Coordinating the large cast proved challenging at times. The most difficult musical numbers to perfect were "Shakin' at the High School Hop" and "We Go Together" due to their fast pace and need for precision.

"We have the entire cast on the stage. You have to make sure all those claps are all on the same time," Mount explained.

Despite these challenges, the shared goal of creating a successful production brought everyone together during tech week and the performances. During this time, cast members could also witness what their fellow cast members had been working on, allowing them to watch the show come together in real time.

"Even though you're in the same production, you still get the excitement of seeing something new because it's so split — there's always more people," Bernazzani said.

The audience delivered a standing ovation to the energetic and visibly excited cast as they concluded their closing night with "We Go Together" with a series of bows that only fueled more applause. The energy was contagious as I left the theater with a jig in my step, humming the catchy refrain of 'chang chang changity chang shoo bop' under my breath.

COURTESY PHOTOS /JENNA KELLER

Middlebury College Musical Theatre's spring show "Grease" debuted in Town Hall Theater this past weekend.

REEL CRITIC: "NO OTHER LAND"

By THIE HARTHONO
Contributing Writer

"No Other Land," a profoundly moving documentary produced by a Palestinian-Israeli collective, was screened on April 10 to a packed Dana Auditorium as part of the Hirschfield International Film Series. The film is directed by debut filmmakers Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor.

The film premiered in February 2024 at the Berlin International Film Festival, where it won the Berlinale Documentary Film Award. Critics around the world praised the work, and it earned a nomination from the British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA) as well as the Academy Award for best documentary.

Following the Oscars, Ballal was injured in an attack by Israeli settlers and detained overnight by Israeli soldiers. The film has since been denounced by both Israel's Minister of Culture as "defamation" and "sabotage" against the state of Israel and the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, who accused the project of violating the organization's "anti-normalization" guidelines.

Despite international acclaim, the heavily politicized film in the U.S. has yet to find an American Distributor to bring it to streaming services. However, it has premiered across several independent theaters across the U.S. who acquired the film through self-distributors.

Last Thursday, students and community members queued outside Dana Auditorium before the film's start time of 7 p.m., but with every single seat filled, many were turned away. Student and faculty organizers of Hirschfield mentioned a possible second screening to allow those interested the opportunity to watch the film. Needless to say, interest in the controversial and widely discussed film was high.

Filmed between 2019 and 2023, the documentary depicts the ongoing destruction of Masafer Yatta, a Palestinian cluster of villages in the occupied West Bank, and the community's efforts to resist the Israeli occupation. The film also depicts the friendship between co-directors Basel Adra and Yuval Abraham, a Palestinian activist and Israeli journalist. The film draws on found footage from Adra's friends and family filmed as early as 20 years ago.

Masafer Yatta has been home to Palestinian families since the early nineteenth century, according to villagers in the film. Following Israel's occupation of the territory in the Six Day War, the Israeli military designated the area a "live fire" training zone, and the community's existence on the land became illegal. Palestinians appealed to Israeli courts, but a verdict was delayed for over 20 years. During that time, the military regularly destroyed Palestinian villages.

"They destroy us slowly. Every week, a home. Every week a new family must decide: endure, or leave their land," the narrator says.

Denied building permits, Palestinian residents rebuilt their communities under cover of darkness, without access to water or electricity, yet they found ways to survive. In 2022, the Israeli Supreme Court finally sided with the military, permitting it to expel remaining residents from the area.

"No Other Land" portrays the military's forced entry into villages, during which soldiers showed up with bulldozers to raze the villagers' homes, wells and schools. A makeshift children's playground is destroyed, water pipes are sawed and generators confiscated. Palestinian villagers and activists protest the destruction, documenting the events with their cellphones and Adra with his camcorder. The villagers have no legal recourse, and the futility of their situation is heartbreaking.

In a disquieting scene, a tug of war over a generator ensues, and a Palestinian villager is shot and paralyzed by an Israeli soldier. In his home, the villager's mother tells the film crew that she wishes her son had died to be put out of his suffering. Throughout the screening, the audience was audibly shocked by scenes of destruction and violence. Few minutes of the film pass without the sound of cries of young children and the protests of villagers. Repeatedly, villagers ask the guards why this is happening. The answer is always the same: "This is legal" or "Because the courts say so."

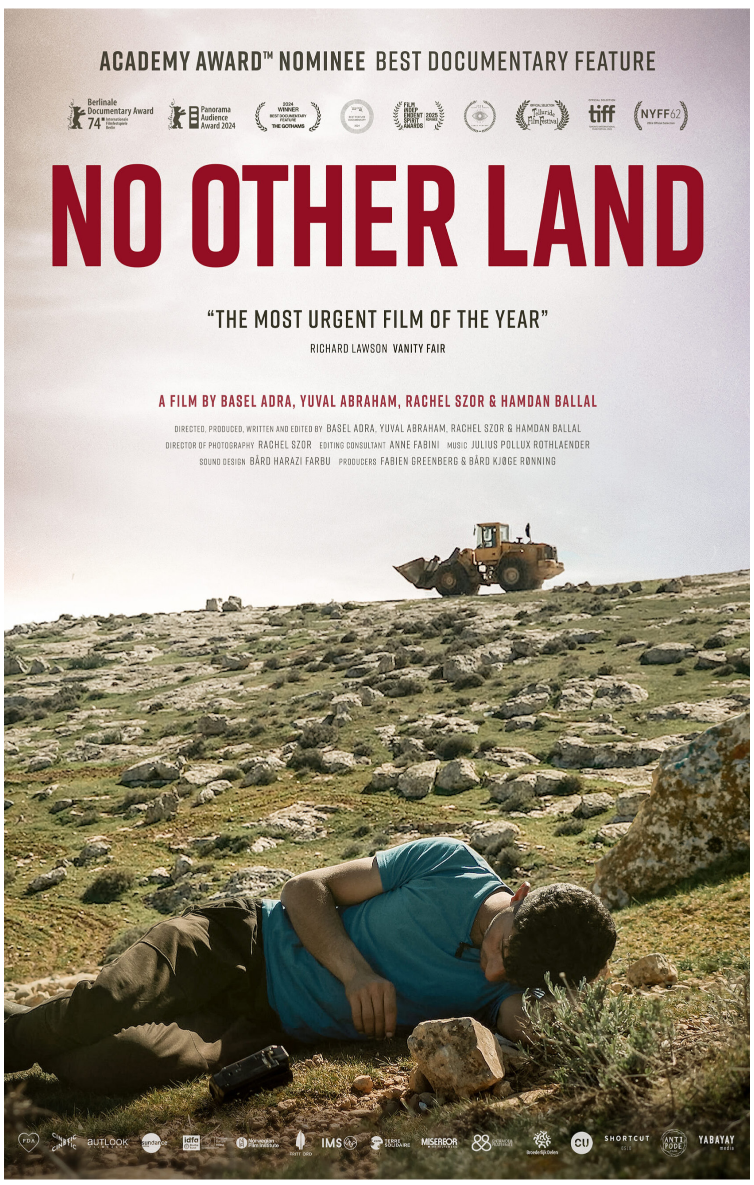
"No Other Land" reveals the unlikely friendship between Adra and Abraham. They meet during one of the military's demolitions, where Adra is filming and Abraham is writing an article. Adra regards Abraham warily at first, but the pair quickly become collaborators. Even as they grow closer, there is an inescapable tension between the pair.

Even in the West Bank, Abraham is protected by Israeli law and able to move freely throughout the country, while Adrais unable to leave the West Bank or enter Israel. Like other residents of Masafer Yatta, he is not protected by Israeli law, but subject to rule by military tribunal as established at the beginning of the occupation.

The pair have vulnerable conversations, sharing how they hope their work will bring attention to the suffering of Palestinians, but they grow increasingly doubtful of their capacity to evoke change. Adra grew up in a family of activists and has been fighting the occupation his whole life. His first memory is of Israeli soldiers entering his home and arresting his father. His father is arrested again in the film.

The end of "No Other Land" includes footage shot after the documentary had wrapped, following Hamas' October 7 attack. Emboldened and vengeful settlers, accompanied by Israeli soldiers, descend on villages in Masafer Yatta. In a confrontation, Adra's cousin is shot and injured. Due to the global attention brought by the film, violent settler attacks on the community have increased, occurring as recently as this week.

As the credits rolled, silence filled the auditorium; the applause was short and solemn. The audience Q&A was subdued; some community members expressed interest in finding spaces to discuss the film and ongoing political developments to grapple with the troubling realities of the West Bank that were exposed by "No Other Land."


ACADEMY AWARD™ NOMINEE BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE
NO OTHER LAND
"THE MOST URGENT FILM OF THE YEAR"
RICHARD LAWSON VANITY FAIR
A FILM BY BASEL ADRA, YUVAL ABRAHAM, RACHEL SZOR & HAMDAN BALLAL
DIRECTED, PRODUCED, WRITTEN AND EDITED BY BASEL ADRA, YUVAL ABRAHAM, RACHEL SZOR & HAMDAN BALLAL
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY RACHEL SZOR EDITING CONSULTANT ANNE FABINI MUSIC JULIUS POLLUX ROTHLAENDER
SOUND DESIGN BÅRD HARAZI FARBU PRODUCERS FABIEN GREENBERG & BÅRD KJØGE RØNNING

COURTESY PHOTO / HIRSCHFIELD INTERNATIONAL FILM SERIES

"No Other Land" is a powerful documentary that depicts the lives of Palestinians who live in occupied West Bank's Masafer Yatta.

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE COMMUNITY CHORUS DEBUTS A MELODIC JOURNEY OF HUMANITY AND LOVE

By YUHAN ZHANG
Staff Writer

The Middlebury College Community Chorus filled Robison Hall with a heartfelt and powerful performance that celebrated love, humanity and the spirit of community on April 11. The free concert featured nearly 70 non-auditioned chorus members from the college and surrounding towns, and was conducted by Ronnie Romano '20.

Anchoring the program was "So We Try," a major new work composed by Peter Buffett and arranged for the chorus by Peter Kiesewalter. The concert also included pieces by both Felix Mendelssohn and Vermont-based composer Dorothy Robson — who was in attendance — as well as a vibrant new arrangement of "All You Need Is Love" by the Beatles — "In other words, a little bit of everything!" declared the concert program.

The performance opened with "Sing On!" by Vince Peterson, followed by the first set of "So We Try," which included four miniatures: "A Grand Derealization," "Another," "Take the Blame," and "Chasing This Table." These were followed by Mendelssohn's "Mitten wir im Leben sind," directed by assistant conductor Alex Van Sant. This portion of the concert, titled "Revelation," delved into themes of despair and emotional struggle.

"It's kind of metaphorical 'down in the dumps, in the pits of despair,'" Romano said during the performance. "We've now hit rock bottom, and now it's time to go to a happier place."

All the songs in this section echoed these emotional low points and set the stage for the transformation that followed.

The middle portion of the program, titled "Possibility," offered a shift in tone with pieces such as "A Star Shines," "New Day," "Onward" and "Here for the Ride." Highlights included "Against Despair" by Edward Thompson, which brought a sense of hope and resilience to the stage, and "Winter Wheat" by Dorothy Robson with strong local roots. Dorothy and her husband, Dick were founding directors of the Rochester-based White River Valley Players. "Winter Wheat," with lyrics by Dick and music by Dorothy, reflects their deep connection to Vermont's land and community, capturing themes of endurance, renewal and the quiet beauty of rural life.

Romano shared the inspiration behind the recent performance, discussing the origins of his interest in Dorothy Robson's work

"I first encountered Winter Wheat in its original setting, as part of an original musical based on local Vermont history called "Rochester Light and Power." It comes from the time of the women's suffrage movement in the early 20th century and speaks of sowing seeds for future generations. The piece impacted me so much that I asked the composer, Dorothy Robson, to rearrange it for chorus and piano from its original version," Romano wrote in an email to The Campus.

YUHAN ZHANG / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Middlebury College Community Chorus debuted at Robison Concert Hall last Friday.

He added that the impact of one's legacy upon the world as explored in Robson's song spoke powerfully to him.

"We all can sow seeds of love and sustainability that we may not see come to fruition in our own lifetimes, but that may change the course of the world forever. I feel this piece added a necessary element of hope and promise to our concert program," Romano wrote.

The final section of the concert, titled "Love," tackled the most universal and profound theme of all. This section included the concluding movements of "So We Try—Start Again," "Someone's Child," "So We Try" and "Time to Walk Away," which were all brought to life with warmth and sincerity. Both composer Peter Buffett and arranger Peter Kiesewalter attended the show, experiencing their work performed live in this intimate community setting.

Following this set was "To My Old Brown Earth" by Pete Seeger and Paul Halley, which Romano described as "a sweet hug." To close the evening, the chorus performed a jubilant arrangement of "All You Need Is Love." As the song filled the hall, audience members joined in clapping and singing, creating a moment of collective joy and connection.

The concert was more than a performance — it was a journey. From cold to warmth, from despair to love, it condensed the world's emotional landscape into one unforgettable evening. In that hall, music brought a community together and reminded everyone that, in the end, love is what unites us all.

Bar Night

Egan Turner

ACROSS
1 Rowing machines
5 Criticized
11 Molasses-based liquor
14 Record
15 Permit
16 Gibbon or Gorilla
17 Gods
19 They unlock doors at Midd.
20 Horror or romance, for example
21 X-Men, for instance?
22 Plumbers
26 Airport code for a USVI vacation
27 Homes to scleras and corneas
28 Voting group
32 "You either ___ or live long enough to see yourself become the villain"
36 Romans
40 Scottish instruments
41 Before V
42 Fe
43 Orthodontist degree
46 Hogwarts students
52 Helps out
53 Gal Gadot and Adam Neumann, for two
56 "Walk Em Down" rapper ___ Choppa
57 Tavern in town, and a hint to17-Across, 22-Across, 36-Across, and 46-Across
60 Floors in Munroe + number of departments based in BiHall
61 Floodbanks
62 Genetic messengers
63 What draws some into the Super Bowl
64 La ___, Wisconsin
65 "___, queen!"

DOWN
1 Cigar and kitchen suffix
2 2023 Masters winner Jon
3 Apt rhyme of doom
4 Mattress company
5 "Knives Out" detective Blanc
6 "Children should be seen ___ heard"
7 Can be spicy or mild
8 "Euphoria" network
9 Loudest member of deer family
10 Company fairness prgm.
11 "Spider-Man" trilogy director Sam
12 Jim Halpert: "Is it just me or does it smell like ___ in here?"
13 Eight-time Ballon D'Or winner
18 Broadcasts
21 Fruit ___
23 No, in Nuremburg
24 Changed color
25 Goneril's father

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	8	9	10	■	11	12	13
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56			■	57	58	59								
60			■	61						■	62			
63			■	64						■	65			

28 Texter's "give me a sec"
29 Break from Midd.
30 Texter's excited exclamation
31 Belonging to a Valentine marksmen
32 The, in Hamburg
33 First responder org.
34 Groove
35 Columbus sch.
37 Turkish currency
38 "Once ___ a time..."
39 Mail
43 Rhyming nickname for a nice house or condo
44 In a bad mood
45 "Foiled again!"
46 Coca-Cola citrus brand
47 Provoked
48 Paradises
49 Taunts
50 Walt Disney Concert Hall architect Frank
51 Supreme Court Justice Kagan
54 401(k) alternatives, for short
55 Snake sound
57 "Crack Addicts" and "MILF Manor" network
58 Ke$ha song: "___ who ___"
59 Drake's clothing line

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TENNIS TEAMS BUILD MOMENTUM IN NESCAC PLAY

By THEO MANIATIS
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / JOSH BARBER

Senior Co-Captain Nina Farhat '25 won both her doubles and singles match against Connecticut College at home this past weekend.

With temperatures reaching over 45 degrees, Middlebury women's tennis hosted its first outdoor matches of the season against Connecticut College last weekend. As balls whirled back and forth, the Panthers fell into a rhythm — unbothered by the chilly air — and captured their third straight 7–0 win. The team is soaring high this season and remains undefeated in NESCAC play.

Connecticut College, which has never made it to postseason play in the program's 50-year history, limped back home.

In last Sunday's first doubles position, Captains Sahana Raman '25 and Nina Farhat '25 cruised to a 6–0 victory. The dominant duo of Nathalie Vanderreis '25 and Lulu Wu '26 followed with another strong performance, and Ananya Annapantula '27 and Anna Lardner '26 won the third slot to close out doubles play. The Panthers swept doubles 3–0 before heading into singles matches.

The Panthers easily won six of the six singles matches (five of them with ease), but drama ensued in the third slot: Charlotte McCann '26 edged the first set in a tiebreaker, dropped the second 6–4, and then stormed back to take the deciding super tiebreak 10–2, completing the singles sweep for Middlebury.

With the weekend victory, the team moves to an 11–2 record and a six-match winning streak in their first season under Head Coach Olivia Leavitt, who is only five years removed from her own collegiate tennis career at Brandeis University and yet has made an instant impact on the program.

"She has brought really great energy and she's really process oriented," Farhat said after a successful weekend where she extended her singles winning streak to 15 matches. "So rather than focusing on our results, she's been really focusing on making us better as a team overall."

Leavitt's approach emphasizes development over outcomes, Farhat added.

"She's been great at focusing on every single individual player on our team, and bringing us all up together," Farhat said. The players appreciate this personal attention, which has contributed to their impressive campaign.

A NESCAC championship would be particularly meaningful this season under Leavitt's leadership.

"If we can get the NESCAC championship this year it'd be huge and really meaningful to our team — also to my head coach. It's her first year here, so it would be cool for her. It would be our first NESCAC win in history," Farhat said.

For a coach to do so well in their first year is rare and is a testament to Leavitt's ability. But despite the roaring start, the team is taking it one match at a time.

"We have been focusing on just earning every single point or a single match," Farhat told The Campus. "Just focusing on having fun, being the best we can be on court."

The true test awaits in May's playoffs. The Panthers have fallen short in the NESCAC finals for five years straight and the NCAA semifinals for the past three. This season, they hope to break through and bring a championship title to Middlebury.

The men's team, ranked 12th nationally, is also eyeing a trophy. They've won the NESCAC three out of the last four seasons and are regular contenders for the NCAA tournament. Last Sunday, they competed alongside the women's team at the South Street courts.

In the morning, they opened against Connecticut College, who last made the playoffs when Blockbuster was still a retail powerhouse. Middlebury sent them packing 7–0. In the afternoon, the team faced MIT, a strong DIII team that consistently attracts top recruits. The three doubles teams all won, highlighted by a 6–0 victory by Reif Larsen '28 and Noah Lewis '27 in the third slot.

In singles play, Thehan Wijemanne '27 and Noah Laber '25 secured key victories. Laber was perfect on the day, winning all four matches across doubles and singles. The Panthers almost ran into trouble as MIT clawed back two matches – one of them in three hard-fought sets. Sensing the danger, Neel Epstein '25 shut the door in two sets, sealing a nail-biting 4–3 decision.

After starting the season in second gear, the men's team have now won three straight. A couple of weeks ago they came razor close to beating the number one team in the country, Claremont-Mudd-Scripps College. The talent is evident, but championship aspirations will require more consistent performances.

Epstein, a senior captain this year, has seen the team through peaks and valleys. He's celebrated two NESCAC championships but has also endured three NCAA semifinal defeats.

"Each time after the match, I've kind of had this sour taste in my mouth," Epstein said. "It really helped me motivate for the following season, work really hard during the summer to try and get better, so we could eventually get over the hump."

In their quest to get over the hump, the Panthers have a step-up on their rivals; they are an incredibly tight-knit group of players, a value passed down from senior captains to the younger players every year.

"The way that we build relationships outside the court – whether supporting someone when they have a thesis presentation or they're going through a tough time – makes a big difference not just in everyone's experience but also the results we have on court," Epstein told The Campus. If the Panthers can translate their off-court unity to competition for the remainder of the season, success should follow.

As both teams approach the tail end of the season, they seek to write new chapters in their program histories — the men in the NCAA tournament and the women in the NESCAC. Each side will continue their road to the playoffs next weekend against Williams, with the women's matches taking place at home.

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FROM NESCAC TO NFL: THE UNLIKELY STORY OF THOMAS “THE TANK” PERRY

Continued from Page 1

flourish at liberal arts colleges in the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC). The conference doesn’t even permit its teams to participate in NCAA postseason play, much less serve as a pipeline to professional football. Once the fall season ends, off-season training is limited at Middlebury, so opportunities to improve mostly fall on Perry to be self-sufficient in his individual training.

Middlebury has had just one NFL player in its history — Stephen Hauschka ‘07, a kicker who went on to win a Super Bowl. What makes Perry’s story even more remarkable is his position; Offensive linemen from Division III rarely make it to the NFL, unlike specialists like kickers who can more easily “sneak in” to the NFL, according to Ethan Vashel ’25, a wide receiver on the football team this year.

Yet here stands Perry, a 6’3”, 310-pound offensive lineman who turned heads at the East-West Shrine Bowl – the only Division III player invited. Facing defensive linemen from powerhouse SEC programs like the University of Georgia, Perry didn’t just participate: He excelled. Videos of his impressive repetitions against highly-touted prospects exploded across social media. At the Shrine Bowl, the team even designed a trick play where Perry would receive the ball, something rarely afforded to offensive linemen. Suddenly, NFL scouts were adjusting their travel schedules to include stops at our small liberal arts college tucked away in the Green Mountains.

“It was an awesome experience,” Perry said about competing with players he’d previously only watched on television. “I’ve seen these people play on TV… I loved it.”

Coming from a family with strong football lineage, Perry always knew he wanted to be an NFL football player. His cousin John Moffitt played with the Seattle Seahawks and his father played defensive line at Brown University, where his uncle also played and is in the Brown football Hall of Fame.

“With my dad, like he was my first O-line coach,” Perry said. “He coached me in seventh and eighth grade… He’d always try to coach me, like, ‘I hate to go against guys who have really tight elbows and, like, really locked on your breastplate.’”

How does a player of Perry’s caliber end up at a DIII school? Several factors worked against his D1 prospects. Perry came from a tiny high school in Killingworth, Connecticut, where competition was not at the level that typically attracts D1 scouts. According to his teammate Vashel, Perry’s high school team ran a Wing-T offense, a basic system that rarely passed the ball, giving the player almost no opportunity to develop pass-blocking skills — a critical evaluation point for college recruiters.

Another consideration is that he was considerably smaller then. Perry entered Middlebury around 250 pounds before adding 50–60 pounds of muscle mass during his collegiate career.

“The athleticism and talent were probably there in high school, but he wasn’t as big,” Vashel explained. “Coming to Middlebury and training more consistently around a community focused on weight training gave him a platform he wasn’t exposed to at his small Connecticut school.”

Ironically, he is now facing that same uphill battle again, trying to prove a small-school player can compete at the next level.

Unlike most NFL prospects, Perry didn’t even have a senior year of high school football — Covid-19 canceled his final season in Connecticut. Instead of lamenting lost opportunities, Perry channeled his energy into preparation.

Perry’s NFL dream became clearer during his freshman year at Middlebury.

But the true crystallizing moment came last summer while training in Frisco, Texas with Coach Duke Manyweather alongside professional offensive linemen, like Will Campbell from Louisiana State University (LSU), who is a projected top-10 pick in the upcoming draft.

“Being right there in their workouts, doing the same lifts, the same weight, the same drills and seeing this is awesome. I can do this,” Perry said, the memory of realization still evident in his voice.

By the fall, Perry was back at Middlebury for a successful 6–3 season with the team, dominating any NESCAC competition that came his way. Then, from December through March Perry immersed himself in the craft of offensive line play with almost monastic dedication while most of his peers navigated J-Term and spring semester’s start.

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Thomas Perry ’25 anchoring the offensive line as guard during Middlebury’s matchup against Amherst last fall.

“It’s been so much fun,” he said. “I didn’t realize how much fun it would be just to go to train, train three times a day, the whole day at the training facility. Just eat, train, eat, train.”

Recently, Perry has been adapting to a position change from guard to center, showcasing versatility that increases his value to NFL teams. Perry has played guard his entire collegiate career at Middlebury, making his transition to center all the more impressive. The center position adds the technical challenge of snapping the ball while mentally reacting to the field and maintaining blocking assignments.

When asked about the adjustment to the position change, Perry enthusiastically said: “Center is awesome. I get to use my hand before anything is moving, so that’s pretty cool.”

The key to his success is his intense focus. Every morning, Perry wakes up to see the phrase “How are you going to get better today?” on a sign above his bed. It’s not your typical dorm décor, nor is he your typical Middlebury student.

As a Molecular Biology and Biochemistry major maintaining a 3.93 GPA while pursuing medical school aspirations, Perry applies the same meticulousness to his studies that he brings to the gridiron.

“You always got to make sure you’re managing your time right,” Perry noted. “If I have time, I got to open the textbook and use it… With Middlebury, professors have so many office hours, you just go in and say hi, and they’ll help you catch up.”

What further separates Perry from other high-achieving Middlebury students — and even from other draft hopefuls — is his penchant for self-imposed challenges in his free time.

“I like to do longer adventures where I try to push myself,” he said with a characteristic understatement. “I’ve done a 100-mile bike ride. I’ve done a couple of 23-plus mile hikes.”

These aren’t casual weekend activities — they’re deliberate tests of mental fortitude. NFL scouts, always searching for indicators of psychological resilience alongside physical attributes, have taken notice.

When asked how he handles the mounting pressure and attention, Perry answered, “When it comes to stress, I go disc golfing,” he said to a room, sparking laughs at the press conference. “[I] just get in nature to escape any stress.”

Perry’s paradox — being both extraordinarily focused and disciplined, yet gentle and joyful — is part of what has made his journey a source of collective pride at Middlebury.

“My teammates have supported me the whole time, since I was a freshman. I remember my first step in the locker room at Middlebury, and seeing all the seniors and everybody on the team, and just thinking, holy cow, every one of these guys is just a great dude. Everybody’s a great human being. And it just felt really amazing,” Perry said with a smile.

He has a genuine connection with everyone in the program – from senior captains to first years – a unique asset he’ll take with him to the NFL to elevate the culture of any team.

“It’d be a dream come true,” Perry said about the prospect of being drafted. “Awesome to be able to represent Middlebury and Vermont and Connecticut and New England.”

Has fame changed his daily experience on campus?

“I don’t think I notice anything,” Perry said. “I feel like when I go to the dining hall and get my three glasses of milk, people were already looking at me a little funny so I don’t really notice too much of a difference.”

For a small college unaccustomed to the spotlight of professional sports, Perry carries more than just his own aspirations. He carries the pride of a community discovering that even from the unlikeliest places, extraordinary journeys can begin.

Whether he hears his name called on draft day or pursues opportunities as an undrafted free agent, Thomas “The Tank” Perry has already rewritten what’s possible for a Division III athlete with uncommon determination and a daily commitment to improvement.

Just don’t expect him to boast about it. That’s simply not his style.

Seven Questions with Michael Vanesko ’25, pole vaulter

By BROOKE FRIBERG
Sports Editor

Michael Vanesko ’25 is a senior pole vaulter on Middlebury Track and Field. Originally from Dallas, he is an Architectural Studies major at Middlebury College. His personal record for pole vaulting is 4.15 meters, but his impact on the team extends far beyond the runway and bar. In this iteration of Seven Questions, Vanesko discusses his journey to pole vaulting and reflects on his time at Middlebury.

Brooke Friberg: When did you first pole vault and how has your relationship with the sport changed over your time at Middlebury?

Michael Vanesko: I started pole vaulting during my sophomore year of high school because all of my friends were doing track, and I wanted to be part of the team. Originally, I started out as a distance runner, but I soon realized that I didn’t like running at all. So I picked a random field event that didn’t require as much running, and I ended up on pole vault.

Over time, my relationship with vaulting definitely changed as I got better. Soon, vaulting became something I was truly interested in and excited about, rather than just a way to hang out with my friends that didn’t require too much running.

BF: What made you choose Middlebury? Is there anything about your experience that you wish you could change, or have done differently?

MV: I chose Middlebury for a variety of reasons, including the campus’s access to nature, small class sizes, four-season climate and the opportunity to be on the track team. I am very satisfied with my college experience at Middlebury, but if I were to do it all again, I think that I would spend more time meeting with professors about non-class related stuff to get to know them on a more personal level and trying to branch out and take a wider variety of classes. Although I was able to take some classes outside of my major, I wish I was able to try more outside of environmental studies, architecture and italian.

BF: What’s your favorite thing about your teammates?

MV: My favorite thing about my teammates is their dedication to the team and supportive nature. Every day, when I see them in the [Athletics Complex], they always greet me with a smile and ask me about my day. I love having fun with the team, and it’s always nice to team members around campus.

BF: Do you have any pre-meet rituals, either individually or with your teammates?

MV: I don’t have much in the way of pre-meet rituals besides my typical warm-up. Usually, I will wear the same blue cargo pants and white Middlebury T&F shirt, but as far as rituals go, not much.

BF: What has been the most memorable moment in your Middlebury pole vaulting career?

MV: The most memorable moment in my career so far was at a home meet during my sophomore year. During the meet, I was able to set a new personal record (PR), but what made that particular meet so memorable was that all of my off-the-team friends were able to come see me jump. For most of them, it was their first time ever seeing me or anyone else pole vault, so having them there to cheer me on and support meant a lot, and it is still a special day to me.

BF: What’s your favorite dining hall on campus, and what’s your favorite Middlebury meal?

MV: My favorite dining hall is hard to say. I definitely like Proctor the best for breakfast since it’s been close to my dorm since freshman year, and the Atwater ambiance is great for team dinners. My favorite dining hall meal is either Indian food, General Tso’s chicken or chicken stir fry.

BF: What’s your place to study on campus and why?

COURTESY PHOTO / GEORGE MADISON

Michael Vanesko ’25 is an architecture studies major and has a personal record of 4.15 meters for pole vaulting.

MV: I like to study in my room a lot because it is the best place for me to block out distractions, and it’s where my Windows desktop is, which I need to use for a lot of the architecture software that only supports Windows systems. Outside of my room, I like to go to the Virtue Field House timing room before practice. I like that spot a lot because it is close to the indoor track, there are usually other team members there before practice, and it has a lot of big windows that let me look at the various activities going on at the track while I do my homework.

Editor’s Note: This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.